THE BATTLE FOR POPULAR SUPPORT: AN ANALYSIS OF AMERICA'S EFFORTS IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST ISIS

BY

JOSHUA B. HOLADAY

A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF ADVANCED AIR AND SPACE STUDIES FOR COMPLETION OF GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

SCHOOL OF ADVANCED AIR AND SPACE STUDIES

AIR UNIVERSITY

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

MAY 2016

APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, augmentation, and expression.

_____

Harold R. Winton   (Date)

_____

James M. Tucci   (Date)

DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Major Joshua B. Holaday is an active duty officer in the US Air Force. His most recent assignment was to Headquarters Air Mobility Command where he served in the Commander's Action Group and in the Directorate of Test and Evaluation. Prior to his staff assignment, he completed two operational tours as a C-17A pilot at Dover AFB, Delaware and Charleston AFB, South Carolina.

Major Holaday holds a BA in Foreign Affairs from the University of Virginia and a MA in Administrative Leadership from the University of Oklahoma.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABSTRACT

In its fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), the United States has developed five lines of effort (LOEs): provide military support to our partners; impede the flow of foreign fighters to ISIS; stop ISIS's financing and funding; address humanitarian crises in the region; and expose ISIS's true nature. A much addressed question in the media as well as scholarly analyses is whether these LOEs will be effective in defeating the ISIS insurgency in Iraq, or whether the United States' primary reliance on airpower to attack ISIS is likely to result in further sectarian discord between Sunnis and Shia in the region. To explore this question, this thesis uses a systems-theory model that analyzes insurgencies according to how actions affect popular support among the host nation's population.

It begins by analyzing, the Hukbalahap insurgency in the Philippines and counterinsurgency efforts in Vietnam from 1964-1968 to determine the validity of the systems-theory model. It then explores ongoing operations against ISIS from the perspective of the United States. The analysis suggests that America's current strategy is unlikely to have an appreciable impact on Sunni popular support for ISIS. Ineffective US State Department communications and ISIS's media savvy have ceded the initiative in the strategic narrative to America's enemies. As a result, many Iraqis believe that the United States created ISIS and is directly supporting the terrorists. Instead of focusing on tactical battlefield success, the United States generally, and its armed forces specifically, must view the conflict through the lens of propagating just government rule in the region to reduce Sunni popular support for ISIS. Even if it has to halt its air campaign in support of anti-ISIS efforts, the United States should compel the Iraqi government to arrest its sectarian practices. Without such bold action, the United States may stop ISIS's genocide against non-Sunnis only to see Shia militias enact genocidal revenge in Sunni cities.

CONTENTS

ILLLUSTRATIONS

Chapter 1

Introduction

And so even as we support Iraqis as they take the fight to these terrorists, American combat troops will not be returning to fight in Iraq, because there's no American military solution to the larger crisis in Iraq. The only lasting solution is reconciliation among Iraqi communities and stronger Iraqi security forces.
— *President Barack H. Obama, 7 August 2014*

In May 2015 as Iraqi Security Forces battled soldiers of the self-proclaimed Islamic State (hereafter referred to as the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, or ISIS) for control of the city of Ramadi, a sandstorm reduced visibility around the city and effectively prevented US and Iraqi aircraft from conducting airstrikes in support of government troops on the ground.[1] ISIS forces took advantage of the weather and launched a coordinated, deadly assault into the city's center. They first drove an armored bulldozer through a line of T-wall barricades protecting government buildings in the provincial capital. They then shoved a convoy of as many as 30 vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) through the hole in the city's defensive wall and attacked key fighting positions and government buildings, destroying what a senior US State Department official described as "several city blocks" with each detonation. Many of the VBIEDs had approximately 5,000 pounds of dynamite, about the same explosive strength as the 1995 truck bombing in Oklahoma City.[2] Iraqi forces, unable to receive air support and

---

[1] Eric Schmitt & Helene Cooper, "ISIS Fighters Seized Advantage in Iraq Attack by Striking During Sandstorm," *The New York Times*, May 18, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/19/world/middleeast/isis-fighters-seized-advantage-in-iraq-attack-by-striking-during-sandstorm.html, (accessed 23 Dec 15).
[2] Justin Fishel, "Fall of Ramadi: 30 Car Bombs, 10 as Big as Oklahoma City Blast, US Official Says," *ABC News*, May 20, 2015, http://abcnews.go.com/ABCNews/fall-ramadi-30-car-bombs-10-big-oklahoma/story?id=31188102oklahoma/story?id=31188102, (accessed 23 Dec 15).

overwhelmed by the surprise and magnitude of the sudden attack, withdrew, abandoning the city to an ISIS occupation that continued into 2016. Defeat in such a large and politically significant city added to growing concern over the ability of Iraq's security forces to stop ISIS's advance without increased international military support. The growing alliance between Iraq and Iran and the transformation of the Iraqi army into a thinly veiled Shia militia was also a cause for alarm for many— particularly American allies contemplating participation in an expanded air war against ISIS.[3]

Later in 2015 ISIS-inspired attacks in Paris, France, and San Bernardino, California, raised doubts as to whether the US and Iraqi strategy against ISIS in Iraq was effective.[4] President Obama repeatedly insisted that the American strategy for containing, degrading, and defeating ISIS required more time but that it was the course of action most likely to result in the destruction of the terrorist pseudo-state.[5] But what, specifically, is President Obama's strategy and what kind of enemy is the United States and its allies facing in Northern Iraq? In September 2014, Secretary of State John Kerry and Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel met with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member countries and established five lines of effort (LOEs) to defeat ISIS. The five were listed as follows:

> 1) Provide military support to our partners
> 2) Impede the flow of foreign fighters to ISIS
> 3) Stop ISIS's financing and funding

---

[3] Sandy Vingoe, "Iran's Iraqi Proxy War and the Potential Virtues of a Tehran-Washington Partnership." *The NATO Association of Canada,* 19 Oct 2015. http://natoassociation.ca/irans-iraqi-proxy-war-and-the-potential-virtues-of-a-tehran-washington-partnership/ (accessed 30 Dec 15).

[4] During President Obama's remarks in Antalya, Turkey on 16 Nov 15, several questions from the press focused on the possible need to shift US strategy against ISIS. President Barack Obama, Press Conference in Antalya, Turkey, 16 Nov 15, https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/11/16/press-conference-president-obama-antalya-turkey.

[5] President Obama, Press Conference in Antalya, Turkey, 16 Nov 15.

4) Address humanitarian crises in the region

5) Expose ISIS's true nature

The State Department described these LOEs as being mutually reinforcing pathways to degrading and defeating the ISIS threat.[6] Because President Obama clearly stated that the US strategy is working and merely needs more time for results to become evident, this paper will examine the five LOEs created by the Departments of State and Defense to determine the extent to which they are likely to help, hinder, or be of no effect in the American-led efforts against ISIS.

This thesis considers ISIS to be an Islamic fundamentalist insurgency that uses terrorism and battlefield brutality as tactics in its efforts to establish and expand a legitimate global Caliphate. Although such a Caliphate must control territory to remain viable, ISIS displays several signs of a partially successful insurgency.[7] The United States Government defines insurgency as "a protracted political-military struggle directed toward subverting or displacing the legitimacy of a constituted government or occupying power and completely or partially controlling the resources of a territory through the use of irregular military forces and illegal political organizations."[8] ISIS's propaganda magazine *Dabiq* states that the group's jihad compelled government forces to retreat, resulting in the power vacuum necessary for the establishment of the state.[9] It is this requirement to control territory that differentiates the ISIS insurgency from terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda, which viewed an Islamic State as something to be obtained

---

[6] United States Department of State, "The Global Coalition to Counter ISIL," http://www.state.gov/s/seci/ (accessed 23 Dec 15).

[7] Graeme Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants," *The Atlantic*, March 2015, http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/.

[8] United States Government, *Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency,* 2012, http://www.mccdc.marines.mil/Portals/172/Docs/SWCIWID/COIN/Doctrine/Guide%20to%20the%20Analysis%20of%20Counterinsurgency.pdf (accessed 23 Dec 15).

[9] The Islamic State, "From Hijrah to Khalifah," *Dabiq*, no. 1: 38-40.

sometime in the future.[10] Thus, this thesis considers ISIS to be an insurgent organization. To evaluate the State Department's LOEs against the ISIS insurgency, I will utilize Lieutenant Colonel Jim Baker's[11] systems-thinking model for analyzing counterinsurgency strategies.

According to Baker, systems-thinking models use balancing and reinforcing feedback loops to analyze actions.[12] A balancing loop involves actions designed to take a current condition and change it into a desired state, such as filling an empty glass with water until the liquid reaches the intended level. A feedback loop describes systems in which actions reinforce each other. For example, a bank account earns interest, thereby increasing the amount of principal and subsequently earning more interest. In each type of loop, popular support for an insurgency is the key element. It is important to note that popular support in this case does not necessarily mean approval of or agreement with the insurgent cause. Violent coercion also can motivate people to support an insurgency, and such support is vital to an insurgent movement regardless of how it is created or sustained. In sum, reinforcing and balancing loops can be used to describe how actions taken, or not taken, by insurgents or the government can ultimately affect popular support for an insurgent organization.

Baker's theory uses two balancing loops and one feedback loop to evaluate how actions influence popular support for insurgents. The first balancing loop concerns security (Figure 1). Starting at the bottom of the loop, support for the insurgents creates an increase in insurgent attacks. Government forces respond to these actions by providing security,

---

[10] Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants," *The Atlantic*, March 2015.

[11] Jim Baker is currently the head of the Office of Net Assessment, an independent organization that reports directly to the US Secretary of Defense.

[12] For this and the subsequent four paragraphs, see: Jim Baker, "Systems Thinking and Counterinsurgencies," *Parameters*, Winter 2006-07, 26-43. http://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/Articles/06winter/baker.pdf.

regardless of specific method, that gradually (note the delay in the loop) increases feelings of safety in the populace while reducing support for the insurgents. As popular support decreases, the frequency of attacks and need for government action to provide security should decline until the insurgency is defeated. There are important qualifications to the process depicted in this loop that will be explained later in this chapter.
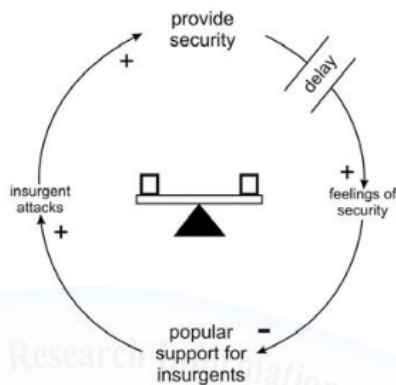
Figure 1—Provide Security Balancing Loop
Source: Jim Baker, "Systems Thinking and Counterinsurgencies,"
Parameters, Winter 2006-07, 29.

The second balancing loop (Figure 2) shares popular support for insurgents, but this time at the top of the loop. As the insurgency becomes more popular, the government loses support and should therefore attempt to rule more justly to deal with grievances and persuade more citizens to return to loyalty. When these issues are properly addressed, the civic or economic reasons for supporting the insurgency will be minimized and popular support for insurgents will diminish. There are significant delays between government reform to rule justly, economic improvement, and a possible decrease in insurgent support. The government's challenge is to sustain reforms soon enough and long enough to improve conditions and hinder the insurgency.
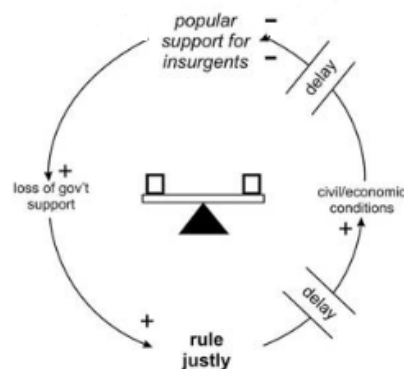
Figure 2—Rule Justly Balancing Loop
Source: Jim Baker, "Systems Thinking and Counterinsurgencies,"
Parameters, Winter 2006-07, 33.

Finally, Baker describes a feedback loop that ties the two
balancing loops together and produces a cohesive system (Figure 3). The
feedback loop results from government actions to provide security in
response to insurgent attacks. If security actions are undermined by
poor intelligence or are perceived as being indiscriminate in which people
they target, the population will quickly become disillusioned with and
resentful of the government. This weakens the government's ability to
rule justly, thereby increasing support for the insurgents. The final
systems-thinking theory diagram shown below simplifies the two
balancing loops, but also demonstrates the delicate balance a
government must strike when combating an insurgency. The ultimate
goal must be to reduce popular support for the insurgents while
enhancing support for the government, but the actions most readily
available to police and military forces may feed the very insurgency they
seek to eliminate. The delays inherent in decreasing this support,
coupled with the lack of delay in the systems that increase insurgent
support, are vital. Positive government actions require considerable time
before results become evident while negative actions generate feelings of
hostility in the target population almost immediately. Baker's model

6

suggests that mounting an effective counterinsurgency campaign requires good intelligence, a just government (although certainly not necessarily a liberal democratic government), an absence of indiscriminate security measures that alienate the population, and time.
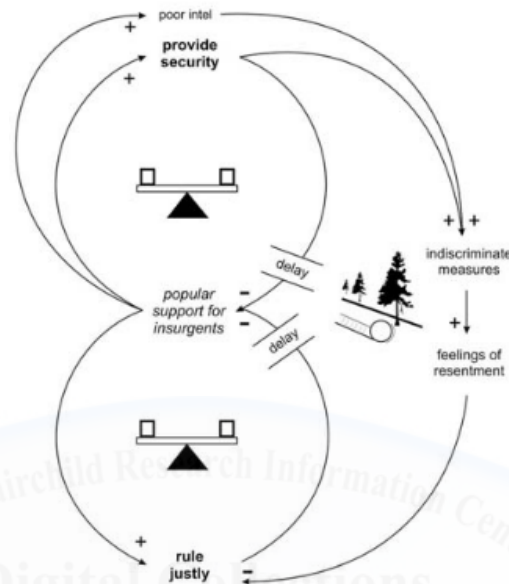
Figure 3—Systems-Thinking Model for Counterinsurgency
Source: Jim Baker, "Systems Thinking and Counterinsurgencies,"
Parameters, Winter 2006-07, 35.

There are important qualifications to Baker's model. First, "just rule" does not necessarily imply democracy. As amply demonstrated in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom, simply installing a democratic government does not guarantee protection against insurgency. A government fighting an insurgency may undertake significant reforms in how it governs, but immediately undermining popular support for the insurgents is of utmost importance. Second, providing security is necessary; but it is equally necessary to do so in a manner that avoids creating more insurgents than are removed from the battlefield or converted to the government side. Insurgency is a political action best understood as a process of competitive nation building between the

7

insurgents and the government.[13] It is neither waged nor defeated by military activities alone.[14] A government's security forces must be employed with intelligence and cultural sensitivity to defeat the insurgents without fanning support for their cause. Baker also argues that military or police actions can create feelings of hostility in the populace that are frequently directed at the government. The government is held responsible for the actions of its agents.[15] Political leaders thus have a vested interest in dictating rules of engagement and in monitoring how military or police forces interact with the people.

The link between national-strategic policies and local tactical events is vital to a successful counterinsurgency campaign. Political leaders and military forces cannot work independently; their efforts must be combined at every level, ideally operating in small teams close to the population.[16] Insurgents and government forces typically compete for support from a minority of the population. Most citizens will go along with whichever side is stronger, has forces in the immediate vicinity, and provides the better opportunity for survival.[17] Although neither side can afford to put forces in every village to ensure loyalty, interaction with local leaders in small towns is fundamental to collecting the intelligence necessary to guide future actions. This also is a constructive method for gathering information about grievances that otherwise may be exploited by the insurgency. Remaining focused on local issues through close interaction with a population allows military and police forces to get to know the people, creates mechanisms for addressing grievances, and helps provide accurate feedback during the delays between government counterinsurgency actions and decreasing support for the insurgents. Above all, a locally based approach to counterinsurgency increases the

---

[13] Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 218.
[14] United States Government, *Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency*, 2012: 23.
[15] Baker, "Systems Thinking and Counterinsurgencies," 36.
[16] Baker, "Systems Thinking and Counterinsurgencies," 37.
[17] Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 103.

likelihood of focusing efforts on affecting the center of gravity of any insurgency: the popular support of the host population.

This thesis seeks to accomplish two things. It first analyzes two historical counterinsurgency campaigns to assess the effectiveness of the systems-thinking model for counterinsurgency. In particular, it explores whether the strategies, national policies, and military lines of effort chosen by the Filipino government during its Hukbalahap insurgency were likely to have positive effects on popular support for the Huk movement. The same approach is used to investigate the efforts of the South Vietnamese and American governments during the Vietnam War leading up to the 1968 Tet Offensive, in which communist forces simultaneously attacked cities and towns across South Vietnam despite years of American-led counterinsurgency efforts.[18]

The thesis then applies Baker's systems-thinking model for counterinsurgency, modified as necessary by the results of the above-mentioned historical analysis, to the efforts of the United States against ISIS. It analyzes policy statements from American political and military leaders, as well as the metrics used to measure military actions and to assess progress, against the five US Department of State lines of effort listed above. It is based on the proposition that the true center of gravity for ISIS, as for any insurgent movement, is popular support in the affected regions. Thus, the State Department's LOEs are evaluated according to their effectiveness in reducing support for ISIS. The systems-thinking model will also indicate the extent to which American-led actions in Iraq are improving just rule, providing security to civilians, or proving to be dysfunctional.

The scope of this paper is limited to American actions that increase or decrease popular support for ISIS in Iraq. Although ISIS has a

---

[18] US Department of State Office of the Historian, "US Involvement in the Vietnam War: The Tet Offensive 1968," https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/tet (accessed 31 Dec 15).

significant presence in eastern Syria, including its would-be capital in Raqqa, the United States' main effort remains focused on Iraq. American advisors are present, and the preponderance of US airstrikes has occurred, in Iraq. America's relationship with Iraq is much closer than it is with Syria, and Russia's involvement in Syria significantly complicates the situation there. Thus, the focus of this analysis is on American efforts in Iraq. This paper also does not address a myriad of other issues, such as the debate over what role US combat troops should play in Iraq, domestic American security, or how the world should care for refugees fleeing the region. Iranian Revolutionary Guards Qods Force activities in Iraq also are beyond the scope of this paper, although their interactions with Iraqi militia and influence over the Baghdad government should concern the United States due to the growing perception in Iraq of the Iraqi army as being little more than a Shia militia.[19] This last factor almost assuredly makes reconciliation between the central Iraqi government and its disaffected Sunni citizens difficult and deserves future analysis.

For practical purposes, the thesis analyzes the strategic problem represented by ISIS as it existed on 21 March 2016. As in all counterinsurgency campaigns, conditions on the ground in Iraq and Syria are fluid and subject to rapid changes. However, the strategic policies of the United States government as well as the lines of effort listed by the State Department and pursued by the Department of Defense have remained largely unchanged. This research should reveal the degree to which these LOEs in place since 2014 might lead to a reduction of ISIS support. It is important to note that regardless of what the analysis ultimately shows, there is no guaranteed formula for defeating an insurgency. LOEs should constantly be reviewed, revised,

---

[19] Caleb Weiss, "Qods Force Commander Photographed with Iraqi Militia in Aleppo," *The Long War Journal,* 18 Oct 15, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/10/qods-force-commander-photographed-with-iraqi-militia-in-aleppo.php (accessed 31 Dec 15).

and updated based on changing conditions on the ground regardless of the conclusions of this paper.

Before analysis of the ISIS situation can proceed, this thesis must determine the effectiveness of the systems-thinking model in analyzing how effective counterinsurgency courses of action are in influencing popular support for an insurgency. The following chapters will identify actions or reforms taken by actors in a counterinsurgency environment; rate them according to the likely effect on just rule, providing security, and indiscriminate measures by armed forces; and correlate the ratings to the expected impact on popular support for the insurgency. An action that will increase just rule, provide more security, or reduce the likelihood of indiscriminate actions will receive a score of '1.' If the reform will have a derogatory impact, it will earn a mark of '-1.' An action with no expected impact will receive a '0' rating. Scores will be tallied for each of the three systems-thinking categories, and the study will provide analysis of overall effectiveness of a series of reforms on popular support.

To test the utility of the systems-thinking model, this paper studies three case studies in the order in which they occurred. The Hukbalahap rebels in the Philippines after World War II nearly succeeded in overthrowing the government. With help from the United States, timely reforms, and a reinvigorated military effort, the incumbent administration reversed the tide and eradicated the movement. In the 1960s, the United States faced an insurgency in Vietnam but ultimately was unable to prevent the 1968 Tet Offensive's country-wide surprise attack. The thesis analyzes the procedures, policies, and tactics used by the Filipino, American, and South Vietnamese governments in combating the insurgencies. Specifically, the following chapters will use the systems-thinking model to evaluate how actions were likely to impact popular support for the insurgents. Finally, this study does the same for the US campaign against ISIS, revealing the extent to which the current

State Department LOEs require adjustment. The first historical example in this paper is the campaign against the Hukbalahap movement in the Philippines, a case in which counterinsurgency efforts were decisively effective.

Chapter 2

The Hukbalahap Insurgency

So, in effect, the Huks were defeated as soon as the people on the government side actually followed their own rules, and once they did that, the Huks had no reason to overthrow the government, because it became a government of and by and for the people.
—*Major General Edward Lansdale, USAF (ret.), 25 April 1971*

In December 1941, the Imperial Japanese Army invaded the Philippines, forcing the American garrison to surrender five months later. In the invasion's aftermath, guerrilla bands operated out of the mountains and swamps to resist the Japanese occupation. One of these groups called itself Hukbo ng Bayan Laban sa Hapon, Filipino for "anti-Japanese party." Using the acronym Hukbalahap and more commonly known as the Huks (pronounced hooks), this organization represented the merging of two communist groups determined to fight the Japanese presence, generate popular support among the peasants, and eventually gain control of the Philippines after the war.[20] The formation of the Huk amalgamation was caused by the Japanese presence, but the grievances used by communist forces to rally peasants to their cause had much deeper roots.

The Communist Party of the Philippines (PKP) was formed in 1924, shortly after the Third Comintern met in Canton, China. Before the decade was out, the party earned political support from disaffected peasant farmers in the province of Luzon. Unrest spiraled into violence as communist cells conducted sporadic attacks across the region. President Manuel Quezon responded by enacting minor land reform, but

---

[20] Lawrence A. Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection: A Case Study of a Successful Anti-Insurgency Operation in the Philippines, 1946-1955* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1987), 15.

these actions were widely ignored by landlords, the courts, and the central government.[21] Tensions continued to simmer without resolution until the Japanese invaded, but even the occupation was insufficient motivation for effective cooperation between communist and Filipino government forces. Instead, the newly christened Huks were determined to exploit the invasion to set conditions for a communist revolution.

The Japanese army, however, proved a formidable opponent. Chinese soldiers from the communist Eighth Route Army gave materiel and training to Huk formations but quickly became disillusioned with the peasants' poor discipline and inferior tactics. The Chinese withdrew their support just before major Japanese offensives into the Luzon Province in late 1942 and early 1943 defeated the Hukbalahap guerrillas.[22] The Huk leader, Luis Taruc, was forced to reorganize the movement. The most significant reform was the creation of paramilitary units known as Barrio United Defense Corps (BUDC). Although each BUDC typically had fewer than two dozen members primarily responsible for local defense, BUDCs in larger villages often had administrative departments for intelligence, education, agriculture, and other services.[23] Importantly, the BUDC acted as a body of shadow governance and established a framework for communist control of Filipino villages both during and following the war. After the Japanese retreated from the Philippines, the Filipino government continued to ignore the plight of the lower class. Villagers in the Luzon province who had become accustomed to the services and predictability provided by the BUDC willingly turned to the Huks to address their grievances.

Years of war and occupation left much of the Philippines devastated. Even after the Philippines were granted independence from the United States on 4 July 1946, the country continued to rely on

---

[21] MAJ Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 9-10.
[22] Maj Gen Edward G. Lansdale, interview by Maj Alnwick, 30 April 1971, transcript, 23, Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL.
[23] MAJ Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 22-23.

substantial foreign economic assistance. Once US aid reached the Philippines, however, American supervision over allocation ceased. Corrupt Filipino officials siphoned supplies away from peasants, thereby causing villagers to grow distrustful of their government. Although much support for the Huks was based on the perceived need for change instead of widespread acceptance of the communist cause, the Huks represented an appealing alternative.[24]

Initially purported to be democratic, elections in the Philippines were corrupt. Luis Taruc, the leader of the Hukbalahap movement, was elected to congress but was denied his seat when President Manuel Roxas declared the Huks to be bandits and therefore ineligible to hold office. Taruc and the Huks became convinced they could not come to power by working within the existing political structure. They changed the Hukbalahap name to the People's Liberation Army (known by its acronym HMB, but still widely referred to as the Hukbalahap) and aligned themselves with the PKP.[25] The Hukbalahap cause was reinforced in 1949 when regional elections were equally fraudulent, and the Huks began openly recruiting under the slogan "bullets, not ballots." Luzon soon housed schools, armed camps, and centers of production for the communist movement. Newly elected President Elpidio Quirino cracked down on the Huks, but Filipino soldiers exacerbated the situation by burning villages, killing livestock, and indiscriminately murdering civilians.

The situation deteriorated further in January 1950 when the PKP sensed that conditions were ripe for revolution. Huk guerrilla attacks increased ten-fold. Quirino responded by openly endorsing terrorist-style attacks in Huk operational areas, further degrading peasant loyalty. By August the Hukbalahap boasted 15,000 regular soldiers, 100,000 active

---

[24] MAJ Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 34-35.
[25] Russell H. Fifield, "The Hukbalahap Today," *Institute of Pacific Relations* 20, no. 2 (24 Jan 1951): 14-15.

supporters, and a popular support base of more than a million civilians in Luzon province.[26] The governments of the Philippines and the United States recognized that the country was in significant danger of falling to the communist insurgents. Recognizing the need for fresh energy in his government's counterinsurgency campaign, on 31 August 1950 Quirino appointed an energetic and influential Filipino congressman named Ramon Magsaysay as the Secretary of National Defense. Due to the precarious situation in Luzon, Quirino readily acquiesced to Magsaysay's demand to be given broad, sweeping authority to reform the Filipino armed forces.

Born the son of a teacher, Ramon Magsaysay worked as a blacksmith and mechanic to help with his family's finances. When the Japanese invaded, Magsaysay worked with a bus company transporting items for the US Army and was soon commissioned as a captain in a divisional motor pool. After the American defeat, he served as an officer in a guerrilla unit. His strong leadership skills attracted attention, and he was named military governor of a Filipino province after Douglas MacArthur reestablished Allied control of the country. After the war Magsaysay was elected to congress in 1946, in which he served on the House Committee of National Defense. Throughout his time working with the army and in public service, Magsaysay earned a reputation for his ability to relate to the common man, his eagerness to travel to outlying areas to gain first-hand knowledge of an issue, and his willingness to treat Japanese prisoners with kindness and clemency.[27] These traits would serve him well as the Filipino Secretary of National Defense.

Magsaysay did not face the daunting task of reforming his country's efforts against the Huks alone. US Air Force Major Edward

---

[26] MAJ Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 44, 64-67, 70.
[27] MAJ Andrew E. Lembke, *Lansdale, Magsaysay, America, and the Philippines: A Case Study of Limited Intervention Counterinsurgency*, Combat Studies Institute Press (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Combined Arms Center, 2012), 43-46.

Lansdale was assigned to the Joint United States Military Assistance Group (JUSMAG) in Manila after the war. He traveled in the Philippines extensively, forming personal attachments with both civilians and Huk fighters. He returned to the United States in 1948 and was serving in Washington, D.C., in early 1950 when a Filipino delegation led by Magsaysay traveled to America seeking assistance. The two officers stayed up late into the night discussing ways to fight the Huks.[28] After Magsaysay assumed the office of Secretary of National Defense, Major Lansdale was requested by President Quirino to serve in the JUSMAG to help with the Hukbalahap insurrection. Lansdale and Magsaysay quickly resumed their friendship and began assessing the strategic situation, with the defense secretary enacting reforms.

Many actions of the Filipino government and military forces undermined the country's struggling post-war economy and alienated civilians from their political leaders. Magsaysay and Lansdale quickly and accurately analyzed the conditions in the Philippines and focused reforms on four primary categories: the economy, rule of law, military reform, and strategic communication. These reforms will be discussed in detail before being assessed according to the systems-thinking model.

Economic disparity, made worse by the usurpation of land from peasant farmers by rich landowners, was a primary ingredient of popular support for the Hukbalahap movement. Lease agreements typically sent 50% of crop yields to the landowners as fees and rents, and national land reform intended to reduce this burden to 30% was not widely enforced.[29] Farmers were thus left mired in debt with very little ability to purchase land. Magsaysay started with credit reform by encouraging small loans from wealthy Chinese settlers, targeting predatory racketeers competing with legal lenders, and cracking down on lax law enforcement. He ordered the Filipino army to provide free legal assistance by the army's

---

[28] Maj Gen Lansdale, interview by Maj Alnwick, 31-32.
[29] Fifield, "The Hukbalahap Today," 14.

Judge Advocate General's (JAG) corps, thereby impeding wealthy landowners from taking advantage of poor peasants who were unfamiliar with the legal code. Together, these reforms defused a leading cause of Hukbalahap popular support and countered the Huk message of land reform as a rallying cry.[30]

Magsaysay also created the Economic Development Corps (EDCOR). This program took land from the public domain that was fit for farming and allowed it to be settled by a mixture of surrendered Hukbalahap guerrillas and retired Filipino army soldiers. Each plot contained 15-20 acres. The program issued legal titles to each farmer in exchange for a promise to develop and live on the given property. The army helped clear the land, provided security for the farmers, and provided small generators for electrical power. Although the Huks attempted to infiltrate and discredit the EDCOR settlements, the high quality of soil, the considerable economic potential of not working for a wealthy landowner, and the opportunity to own the land turned the EDCOR into another effective counter to the Huk slogan of "land for the landless."[31]

Additionally, Magsaysay addressed the Filipino legal structure. Existing laws were inadequate to cope with an insurgency with widespread support because they forced prosecutors either to present evidence likely to result in a conviction or to release the prisoner after 24 hours. It was not uncommon for a suspected Huk guerrilla to be arrested, held for a day, and encountered on the battlefield again hours later.[32] President Quirino gave Magsaysay authority to suspend the writ of habeas corpus in areas where Hukbalahap insurgents were active. Filipino prosecutors then had more time to gather evidence and the country's legal system became less of a revolving door for suspected

---

[30] MAJ Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 48, 76-77.
[31] MAJ Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 91.
[32] MAJ Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 129.

militants. The most important aspect of this development was that Magsaysay immediately reinstated full rights to suspects proven innocent and took steps to ensure that overzealous officials did not abuse their power. These actions earned the villagers' respect and began to build trust in the Filipino legal system.[33]

To complement the above efforts, Magsaysay enacted reforms to the way the military and Filipino police operated. The Philippines Constabulary (PC) collaborated with the Japanese occupiers during the war; and even after the American military regained control of the islands, the PC's organizational structure and harsh tactics remained unchanged. In the late 1940s, the PC was used to hunt down Hukbalahap guerrillas. The PC's indiscriminate excesses alienated the civilian population, compelling increased civilian cooperation with the Huks.[34] In response to spiraling violence, President Quirino placed the PC under the operational control of the army. This removed the influence of corrupt politicians from the Filipino police forces while giving Magsaysay the ability to coordinate military and PC activities.[35]

The combination of the army with the PC fostered the notion that soldiers were defenders of the people. Magsaysay frequently visited troops serving in front-line villages searching for things that needed improvement. He inspected soldiers in the field, spoke with villagers about recent army operations, improved army pay, issued spot-promotions based on merit, demoted inept officers, and improved supply issues.[36] Magsaysay ordered military hospitals to treat sick civilians and severely punished anyone caught stealing from a villager.[37] These actions had an immediate, positive impact on army morale, demonstrating that the new Secretary of National Defense genuinely

---

[33] MAJ Lembke, *Lansdale, Magsaysay, America, and the Philippines*, 72-73.
[34] MAJ Lembke, *Lansdale, Magsaysay, America, and the Philippines*, 14-15.
[35] Fifield, *The Hukbalahap Today*, 17.
[36] Maj Gen Lansdale, interview by Maj Alnwick, 37-39.
[37] MAJ Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 70-71.

cared about soldiers and how military and police forces interacted with the civilian population.

Additionally, Magsaysay implemented a nation-wide "10-centavo telegram" program. Anyone could send a telegram about army performance directly to Magsaysay's office where a dedicated team was assigned to read and act on the correspondence. Ten centavos was not much money, so nearly every villager could afford to send such a message. Although participation was initially poor, Magsaysay demonstrated a pronounced willingness to take action based on these telegrams. Involvement then increased significantly, and villagers also began using the system to inform the army about Hukbalahap activity.[38] Altogether, Magsaysay's reforms changed the economy, rule of law, army tactics, and strategic communication employed by Filipino military and PC forces at the height of the Hukbalahap insurgency.

The Filipino armed services were put to the test during the 1951 national elections. As noted above, previous elections had been corrupt. Magsaysay prevented fraud through various schemes, such as using military forces to guard polling centers and transporting ballots to tally centers in army convoys. Results were revealing, including the fact that President Quirino's ruling Liberal Party lost a significant number of seats in the Filipino congress.[39] Unlike in previous elections, peasants knew their votes had counted and recognized the role of the army and the PC in facilitating an honest election. As a result of these reforms, the Hukbalahap movement was effectively cut off from receiving matériel support from the Filipino population in Luzon. As Huk violence diminished, President Quirino recognized Magsaysay as a threat to the political establishment and began reducing his power.[40] Tensions between the two grew until Magsaysay resigned and ran for president as

---

[38] MAJ Lembke, *Lansdale, Magsaysay, America, and the Philippines*, 53.
[39] MAJ Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 132-133.
[40] MAJ Lembke, *Lansdale, Magsaysay, America, and the Philippines*, 67.

a member of the opposition Nacionalista party. True to form, Magsaysay toured poor villages across the Philippines while Quirino attempted to intimidate voters and paint the Nacionalistas as American puppets. One provincial mayor, a member of Quirino's Liberal party, openly threatened his citizens by brandishing pistols and promising to shoot Magsaysay supporters if they left their homes on election day.[41] Overall, however, violence was held to a minimum largely because the army successfully reduced fraud by protecting ballots and polling places. The 1953 elections were the calmest held since Filipino independence, and Magsaysay was elected president in a landslide.

The triumph of Magsaysay's democratic election significantly undermined the Hukbalahap insurgency, but the movement's death throes continued well into 1954. Military action culminated during Operation THUNDER-LIGHTNING, an anti-Huk campaign in Luzon involving more than 5,000 Filipino soldiers and police that lasted 211 days. Upon its conclusion in September 1954, the Filipino army had destroyed hundreds of enemy huts; killed or dispersed dozens of guerrillas; and captured Luis Taruc, the Hukbalahap leader.[42] His imprisonment, coupled with the development of corruption-free democratic reforms enacted by Magsaysay, marked the effective end of the Huk rebellion in the Philippines.

This chapter examined economic, legal, military, and communication reforms enacted by Magsaysay to undermine support for the Hukbalahap insurgency. Seven specific reforms will be analyzed using the systems-thinking model on the following pages: EDCOR, credit reform, army legal assistance, nation-wide legal reforms, army organizational changes, preventing election fraud, and the 10-centavos telegram system. These items will be scrutinized to determine

---

[41] Willard H. Elsbree, "The 1953 Philippine Presidential Elections," *Pacific Affairs* 27, no. 1 (March 1954): 3-15.
[42] MAJ Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, 140.

anticipated effects on the ability of the Filipino government to rule justly, its ability to provide security for its citizens, and on the likelihood of a given reform to undermine just rule by the use of indiscriminate security measures that create feelings of resentment among the villagers.

First, the EDCOR program gave farmers legal title to free land and focused on rewarding hard-working army retirees and former Huk guerrillas. After the program's success became widely apparent in the Philippines, EDCOR enhanced the government's ability to rule justly by granting land deeds and removing a primary motivator for supporting the Huks. Settlements were well guarded by army personnel keen on preventing a high-profile insurgent attack. Thus, EDCOR also increased security for the population. These measures were not indiscriminate and did not contribute to a loss in faith in the government. Farmers who either failed to cultivate the land or showed signs of continuing to favor the Hukbalahap were removed from the settlement. Overall, the EDCOR program was highly effective in decreasing popular support for the Huk movement (see Table 1 below for tabulated data for all seven reforms).

Second, credit reform helped poor farmers escape debt in an economy devastated by war and prolonged Japanese occupation. Securing small loans from wealthy Chinese settlers, cracking down on racketeers, and enforcing Filipino law positively impacted the legitimacy of the government's rule. Credit reform did little, however, to provide security or reduce indiscriminate security measures.

Next, Magsaysay's order to provide legal assistance from the army's JAG corps stopped wealthy landowners from using the complex and costly legal system to exploit poor farmers. This increased just rule, though neither improving nor reducing the peasants' physical security. It also had no effect on indiscriminate actions, although it helped the government's cause by negating another of the Hukbalahap's recruiting tools.

22

Reforms to the national legal code gave the government the right to detain suspected guerrillas from being released while investigations were being conducted. These measures kept insurgents off the streets and reduced pressure on prosecutors to fabricate evidence. The Filipino government's rule was thus improved, and its citizens were made safer as a result of this reform. Significantly, strict oversight by Magsaysay and his staff reduced the likelihood of abuse by restoring the writ of habeas corpus expeditiously and arresting prosecutors suspected of abusing their power. Thus, improvements to the national legal code reduced the law's capriciousness.

President Quirino placed the PC under the operational control of the army, and Secretary Magsaysay increased soldiers' pay, cared for civilians in military hospitals, and punished those caught stealing from villagers. In sum, the average soldier came to see himself as a part of and responsible for the security of the civilian community. Together, these changes increased the justice of government rule, improved security, and decreased the likelihood of indiscriminate army reactions to Huk attacks.

Corruption in the 1951 and 1953 elections was significantly reduced in part due to the comprehensive involvement of the Filipino army. Magsaysay used soldiers to monitor polling stations and persuaded civilians to join the National Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL), a non-partisan movement that acted as a get-out-the-vote drive and informed police of suspected voter fraud.[43] Army trucks were used to transport ballots; and its radio network was employed to relay early vote tallies, thus inhibiting tampering. In sum, Magsaysay and the Filipino army increased just rule by ensuring an open democratic election and improved security by keeping an armed presence near polling centers. This had no impact on indiscriminate measures as the

---

[43] Elsbree, "The 1953 Philippine Presidential Elections", 3-4.

elections proved to be nearly non-violent. It is telling that in the 1953 election, after Magsaysay had resigned as Secretary of National Defense and Quirino had directed corrupt officials to interfere with the voting process, the army rank and file stood firm and enforced Filipino laws despite the political pressure.[44] Together with NAMFREL civilians, the army and people of the Philippines ensured a transparent election.

Finally, Magsaysay's 10-centavo telegram program gave the Filipino people a direct line to their Secretary of National Defense. He quickly learned of corruption, army reprisals, and eventually Huk resistance, and took immediate action to correct mistakes and punish wrongdoing. Army officers and regional government officials rapidly enforced standards at the local level for fear of being caught by the ubiquitous Magsaysay. This improved just rule, indirectly provided better security once civilians came to trust the system enough to inform on Huk movements, and decreased the likelihood of indiscriminate measures due to the probability of the perpetrators being caught and prosecuted.

In sum, the reform actions of Magsaysay as viewed through a systems-thinking model are compiled in Table 1 below.

---

[44] Elsbree, "The 1953 Philippine Presidential Elections," 9-13.

Action	Rule Justly	Provide Security	Reduce Indiscriminate Measures
EDCOR	1	1	1
Credit Reform	1	0	0
Army Legal Assistance	1	0	0
National Legal Reform	1	1	0
Army & PC Reforms	1	1	1
Election Safeguards	1	1	0
10-Centavo Telegram	1	1	1

Table 1—Systems-Thinking Analysis of Filipino Reforms
Source: Author's Original Work

The reforms enacted by Magsaysay were highly effective. All seven programs helped the government rule justly. Five provided security to the civilian population, with two actions having no effect on safety. Four reforms reduced the likelihood of indiscriminate measures while the other three had no impact. In total, just rule improved by a score of seven, provide security was plus five, and reduce indiscriminate measures plus four. In this case, Baker's systems-theory model of insurgency predicts a high likelihood of success as indicated both by the strong positive and complete absence of negative scores. Magsaysay's efforts consistently focused on empowering the populace, protecting civilians from insurgents or corrupt officials, and improving the way in which the army interacted with the Filipino people. Thus, the systems-theory model is validated by the high values scored by this population-centric strategy.

As in all counterinsurgency campaigns, however, there was no guarantee that these actions would result in a Filipino victory over the Huks. In fact, President Quirino empowered Magsaysay only after

security conditions had deteriorated significantly, especially in Luzon province in 1950. Quirino moved to marginalize his Secretary of National Defense after the Huks' fighting power had been degraded prior to the 1953 presidential election. There is no evidence to suggest that Quirino was interested in these reforms until after the Huks threatened to overthrow his government. Furthermore, Magsaysay was approached twice by army officers and government officials who wanted his help in overthrowing the Quirino regime. Magsaysay declined both times, trusting instead in the power of lawful rule and the will of the Filipino people.[45] Rather than using force to overthrow an unpopular government in the midst of an autocratic communist insurrection, Magsaysay reformed the economic, legal, military, and communication organizations of his country. In so doing, he established a high standard for effective counter insurgency. The analysis now shifts to another Southeast Asian country battling an insurgency, the Republic of Vietnam.

---

[45] MAJ Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection, 82*, 137.

Chapter 3

The Vietnam War: 1964 to the Tet Offensive

I don't think that unless a greater effort is made by the [Republic of Vietnam] Government to win popular support that the war can be won out there. In the final analysis, it is their war. They are the ones who have to win it or lose it.
                              —*President John F. Kennedy, 2 September 1963*

Like the Philippines, Vietnam was a colony occupied by the Imperial Japanese Army during World War II; but any similarities between the two countries' experiences end there. After Germany defeated France and installed a puppet government in Vichy, Japan asked for and was granted military access to French Indochina. Approximately 30,000 Imperial Japanese Army soldiers occupied Vietnam until the war ended, when communist leader Ho Chi Minh led an uprising that seized control of Hanoi. France, however, was hesitant to relinquish its overseas colonies and landed military forces in southern Vietnam. By late 1946, the country was effectively divided into communist and French areas of control. In November of that year, the French fleet attacked Haiphong harbor and inflicted several thousand civilian casualties. The First Indochina War officially began the following month when communist forces, known as the Viet Minh, attacked Hanoi.[46]

Fighting between colonial forces and Viet Minh guerrillas continued until May 1954 when the garrison at Dien Bien Phu was overrun and the French government lost the political will to continue fighting. The Geneva Peace Accords were signed by Vietnam and France that summer. The agreement temporarily divided the country at the

---

[46] Osborne, Milton Edgeworth, *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Vietnam," http://www.britannica.com/place/Vietnam/World-War-II-and-independence (accessed 26 February 2016).

Seventeenth Parallel and provided for national elections in 1956 to reunify the country under a single independent government. The United States, fearing that the communists would win the election, supported the creation of an anti-communist government in the south. The Republic of Vietnam (RVN), frequently referred to as South Vietnam, elected Ngo Dinh Diem as its first president in 1957. He quickly consolidated his hold by arresting thousands of suspected communist supporters. In response to Diem's ability to resist political revolution in the south, largely through repression, the Vietnamese Communist Party shifted to the use of revolutionary violence to achieve unification in 1959. Anti-Diem guerrilla fighters, dubbed the Viet Cong (VC) by America and its allies, began operating throughout the south seeking to overthrow the RVN. [47]

The Diem regime responded to increased Viet Cong activity with more repression and heavy-handed tactics such as the "strategic hamlet" program. As a way of protecting farming communities and extending government control into the countryside, families were forcibly relocated into reinforced and defended hamlets. This action was intended to force VC guerrillas to launch attacks on Vietnamese civilians, thereby undermining communist propaganda claims that the VC were trying to protect the people.[48] It was also meant to create safe havens in which the civilian population could be kept secure from communist insurgents, robbing the VC of their primary source of supply and intelligence. In practice, however, the program served as a blunt tool for instilling control over the population and compelling loyalty to the Diem regime.[49] Vietnamese civilians, already deeply offended by the government's intrusion into traditional family life, quickly found that the typically

---

[47] Robert K. Brigham, "Battlefield Vietnam: A Brief History," https://www.pbs.org/battlefieldvietnam/history (accessed 26 February 2016).
[48] James Farmer, "Counter-Insurgency: Viet-Nam 1962-1963," The RAND Corporation, August 1963.
[49] US Senate Subcommittee on Public Buildings and Grounds, *The Pentagon Papers Volume II, Senator Gravel Edition* (Washington D.C.: United States Senate) 130-131.

poorly defended hamlets did little to prevent VC infiltration. The program was abandoned after Diem had been removed from power.

By late 1963 the situation in South Vietnam had deteriorated significantly due to Diem's inept policies, his unwillingness to entertain reforms, and VC battlefield successes. In what was ultimately the last straw for the regime, Diem's brother Ngo Dinh Nhu raided Buddhist pagodas because he claimed they were sheltering communist guerrillas. The offended monks led large protests and some individuals resorted to self-immolation. Coup rumors grew in intensity and American advisors called for reform, but Diem remained unmoved. Interestingly, South Vietnamese military officers approached US officials numerous times inquiring about what America's response to a coup would be. On 28 October 1963, US ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., was traveling to the airport with Diem when a RVN general approached him asking if the United States would interfere with a coup. Lodge replied that America "would not thwart a coup." Lodge did not inform Diem of this conversation, and an American lieutenant colonel working for the Central Intelligence Agency met that night with coup leaders to review their plans.[50] The coup began on 1 November with army forces eventually besieging Diem and his brother inside the presidential palace. Diem called Lodge asking for advice, and Lodge merely replied that he was worried about Diem's personal safety. That night Diem and his brother snuck out a back door but were captured on 2 November and assassinated by members of the South Vietnamese Army while in custody.[51] As1964 began, the coup leaders struggled to assert their control over the country while the United States grappled with successful VC incursions into the south, a South Vietnamese economy strained by corruption and war, and an uncertain future with an unsteady government in Saigon.

---

[50] *The Pentagon Papers Volume II*, 259-260.
[51] *The Pentagon Papers Volume II*, 268-269.

The efforts of the United States, South Vietnam, and the numerous allied countries that contributed to the non-communist cause from 1964 until the Tet Offensive in early 1968 focused on five general tasks: stopping the flow of men and equipment across the border, detecting VC or North Vietnamese Army (NVA) soldiers hiding in the jungle, fighting those troops that could be found, protecting the South Vietnamese people, and reforming the RVN. These objectives are listed in rough order of importance to the United States. They are discussed in this manner because, following the Diem assassination, the sheer volume of American military and economic assistance garnered a significant amount of influence over South Vietnamese actions. In general, the Vietnamese at least superficially focused on issues that the Americans found important.[52]

The first problem that had to be addressed was the amount of men and supplies flowing into South Vietnam either across the DMZ or through neighboring Laos and Cambodia. The organization responsible for directing the American war effort in South Vietnam, the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV), detected a rapid and sustained growth in the numbers of VC infiltrating across the border. In 1964, VC combat strength increased by 20% to 33,000 combat troops; this increase was nearly double that of the South Vietnamese armed forces over the same period.[53] American combat troops began arriving in considerable numbers in 1965, and yet VC and NVA infiltration ballooned to an estimated 4,500 individuals per month with a total of 70,100 combat troops in country.[54] Enemy strength in South Vietnam

---

[52] *The Pentagon Papers Volume II*, 289.

[53] Historical Research Branch, Office of the Secretary, Joint Staff, MACV, *Command History, United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam, 1964* (Headquarters Department of the Army, Information Management Support Agency, Alexandria, Virginia, 1965), 121. Document is now declassified.

[54] Historical Research Branch, Office of the Secretary, Joint Staff, MACV, *Command History, United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam, 1965* (Headquarters

increased by a further 42,000 in 1966 despite significant combat losses at the hands of the American army.[55] MACV perceived its interdiction program as having some success in 1967 when an overall decrease in combined NVA/VC strength in South Vietnam was evident. Simultaneously, however, the US estimated that an average of 6,000 personnel per month were able to cross into South Vietnam successfully. Facing the reinforced VC and NVA as 1967 came to a close were 486,000 Americans, approximately 55,000 soldiers from allied countries, and 754,800 South Vietnamese troops and police. Overall, MACV was optimistic about its chances for the 1968 campaign due to the increasing VC body counts inflicted by 98 American maneuver battalions now deployed in country.[56]

American and South Vietnamese efforts to attrit communist forces crossing the border by placing fortifications along known infiltration routes, however, inadvertently played into the North's hands. Communist General Vo Nguyen Giap's objective was to lure US forces away from pacification programs into the borderlands, inflicting casualties and undermining American morale.[57] Outposts such as the US Marine Corps fire base at Khe Sanh did strain the communists' ability to transport supplies nearby, but they also pulled American manpower away from South Vietnamese population centers, especially when they were attacked as the Marines were in early 1968. The US Army did not ignore security in cities, but it relied heavily on South

Department of the Army, Information Management Support Agency, Alexandria, Virginia, 1966), 269. Document is now declassified.

[55] Historical Research Branch, Office of the Secretary, Joint Staff, MACV, *Command History, United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam, 1966* (Headquarters Department of the Army, Information Management Support Agency, Alexandria, Virginia, 1967), 59. Document is now declassified.

[56] Historical Research Branch, Office of the Secretary, Joint Staff, MACV, *Command History, United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam, 1967 Volume I,* (Headquarters Department of the Army, Information Management Support Agency, Alexandria, Virginia, 1968), 18. Document is now declassified.

[57] Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 192.

Vietnamese police and paramilitary forces to conduct this important task.

Furthermore, a Pentagon study estimated that the VC received most of their supplies from within South Vietnam.[58] This was especially true before 1965; support from China was insignificant until later. Furthermore, the VC obtained up to 80% of their supplies by ambushing US and RVN forces and looting the battlefield.[59] The magnitude of the Tet Offensive ultimately proved that the interdiction strategy employed by the United States had failed appreciably to degrade North Vietnam's ability to support guerrilla forces in the South.

After communist fighters entered South Vietnam, the United States tried to locate them so they could be attacked. Detecting small bands of forces moving through heavy tropical forest was difficult, and the Americans used a number of methods to make the job easier. Some innovations, such as Operation Igloo White seismic sensors, are well documented and beyond the scope of this thesis. Operation Ranch Hand, the use of herbicides such as Agent Orange to defoliate jungle canopy, was more controversial. The Departments of State and Defense argued about the moral and legal ramifications of defoliation in the early 1960s, but resistance waned as US troop levels increased. A RAND study in 1967, however, analyzed the program from the perspective of its impact on civilian support for the government, and the results were discouraging. The report indicated that any ability to avoid damaging civilian crops claimed by the army was disputable due to winds that pushed herbicides over mountain ranges. Furthermore, even if food destined for VC soldiers was destroyed, those troops simply seized extra

---

[58] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 168.
[59] Jeanne S. Mintz, Herbert M. Silverberg, James E. Trinnaman, *Short Guide to Psychological Operations in the Republic of Vietnam — 1965* (Special Operations Research Office, The American University, Washington, DC), 4.

supplies from the nearby population.[60] In either case, the VC rarely suffered from a lack of food due to defoliation efforts.

The program also gave a significant boost to communist propaganda because damage claims made to the South Vietnamese government were usually tied up in bureaucratic procedures before land owners and corrupt officials took their cut of the payments. Ultimately, the RAND study concluded that more than 500 civilians suffered damage to their crops for every ton of rice that the VC lost, and those individuals rarely received adequate compensation for their loss.[61] South Vietnamese civilians affected by this program rightfully blamed the United States and their own government. Their complaints, however, fell on deaf ears as American military officers from MACV and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) worked to discredit RAND's findings. They argued that the tactical benefits of defoliation outweighed any political grievances of the Vietnamese and that the only victims of the spraying were either VC or their sympathizers. Not until the Tet Offensive laid bare herbicides' lack of impact on Viet Cong combat efficiency did the American political leadership begin to question the program.[62] Despite the significant likelihood of hurting popular support for the American and South Vietnamese governments among the civilian population, the program did not end until 1971.

Nobody expected the anti-infiltration campaign to be completely successful. Once VC or NVA soldiers were established in South Vietnam, they had to be killed, captured, or forced to withdraw from the country. As previously noted, MACV tended to focus on offensive combat operations while leaving population security and reconstruction to the Vietnamese. In 1965, MACV commander General William Westmoreland

---

[60] Edwin A. Martini, "Hearts, Minds, and Herbicides: The Politics of the Chemical War in Vietnam," *Diplomatic History* 37, no. 1 (2013): 75-76.

[61] Anthony J. Russo, *A Statistical Analysis of the US Crop Spraying Program in South Vietnam*, RAND Report RM-5450-1-ISA/ARPA (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, October 1967), ix.

[62] Martini, "Hearts, Minds, and Herbicides," 79, 81-83.

created a concept of operations with three phases for the war. Phase I
entailed committing US forces as required to halt the VC's battlefield
successes by the end of the year. Phase II called for American and South
Vietnamese troops to resume the offensive in 1966 in high priority areas
to secure breathing space for the RVN to reassert its legitimacy. Phase
III, only needed if the VC refused to accept defeat in Phase II, involved
12-18 months of combat to destroy remaining enemy forces and base
camps in South Vietnam. After the plan was complete, US troops would
depart and leave RVN forces capable of establishing and maintaining
order within their country.[63] To accomplish Phase II objectives,
Westmoreland used his conventional forces to conduct search-and-
destroy operations as part of a strategy of attrition. These missions
typically employed overwhelming firepower delivered by airstrikes,
artillery, and mechanized infantry to destroy VC in the field. Tactics that
relied on heavy firepower, however, created a number of problems for the
American war effort. Viet Cong guerrillas quickly learned not to engage
large formations of US forces, and by 1967 more than 96% of all
engagements involved VC units of company size or less.[64] Even battles
this small typically involved VC troops fighting from favorable terrain
trying to stay as close as possible to American soldiers to mitigate the
threat posed by US airpower and artillery. If conditions were not in their
favor, the VC simply declined combat and slipped away to fight another
day.

The implications of firepower tactics for the South Vietnamese
civilian population were more dire. MACV's main method for measuring
success in the war was the use of body counts. The command's histories
for 1964-1967 report how many enemy soldiers were killed, wounded,
captured, or persuaded to defect. MACV also kept close tabs on the
number of VC weapons recovered after battles and the amount of

---

[63] Historical Research Branch, MACV, *Command History 1965*, 269.
[64] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 192.

supplies destroyed during search-and-destroy missions. Incidents of ground commanders inflating counts of enemy killed in action are well documented, but this emphasis on numbers also provided a powerful incentive for troops to rely on firepower alone. As early as 1964, MACV noticed South Vietnamese troops becoming more reliant on indirect fires and less willing to leave defensive positions to close with VC forces.[65] Tactical aircraft and heavy bombers became increasingly available to soldiers on the ground, with B-52s alone flying 800 sorties per month in 1966 with surge capacity to 1,200 sorties by early 1967.[66] These so-called ARC LIGHT B-52 missions likely had a profound psychological effect on VC and NVA troops subjected to carpet bombing, but the airstrikes also typically occurred in areas soon to be swept by US or RVN armed forces. This gave enemy soldiers ample time to depart an area before a search-and-destroy mission started. Fixed-wing tactical aircraft supported allied troops in direct combat on only 10% of their sorties, and most artillery rounds were fired as harassment and interdiction in which shells were expended based on random timing along suspected infiltration routes.[67] Thus, most ordnance employed by American and South Vietnamese soldiers was unobserved, with a correspondingly high likelihood of inflicting civilian casualties. Many victims of indiscriminate violence resented the death and destruction caused by these attacks. Communist propaganda efficiently used these feelings to spread ill-will toward the American and South Vietnamese governments.[68]

Although MACV focused the bulk of its efforts on finding and destroying VC forces in conventional combat, the United States did dedicate significant resources toward fighting the "other war"—protecting the people of South Vietnam. Managed by organizations variously known

---

[65] Historical Research Branch, MACV, *Command History 1964*, 122.

[66] Historical Research Branch, MACV, *Command History 1967 vol 1*, 405.

[67] Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 200-201.

[68] Robert W. Chandler, *War of Ideas: The US Propaganda Campaign in Vietnam* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1981), 179.

as Revolutionary Development, the Office of Civil Operations, and ultimately Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS), pacification programs were designed to secure the South Vietnamese population from communist influence. President Lyndon Johnson met with leaders of the RVN three times: in Honolulu in February 1966, Manila in October 1966, and Guam in March 1967. Each conference reinforced the importance of pacification and secured written assurances from the RVN of renewed interest in the programs. Ultimately, CORDS was placed under Westmoreland's control with civilians assigned throughout the organization to facilitate cooperation between MACV, the US Embassy in Saigon, and the RVN.[69] The primary architect of President Johnson's pacification efforts, Robert Komer, recognized that the buildup of US military forces could prevent the North from conquering the South but could not guarantee ultimate victory. He argued that more civil improvement functions should be given to the armed forces. Only after the South Vietnamese people were safe could the RVN hope to implement the political, economic, and social reforms necessary to erode popular support for the communists. He viewed MACV's interest in search-and-destroy operations as consuming too much American interest and effort. President Johnson agreed with Komer's assessment.[70]

Despite presidential support for Komer's analysis, MACV continued to view pacification as being primarily a job for the South Vietnamese. Even US Marines and Army special forces had their efforts undermined by the conventional combat mentality of MACV officers. Intelligence on VC operations gleaned during pacification campaigns frequently was acted on immediately with increasing quantities of firepower by the US and RVN regular armies, regardless of the damage inevitably done to the

---

[69] *The Pentagon Papers Volume II*, 516.
[70] Frank L. Jones, "Blowtorch: Robert Komer and the Making of Vietnam Pacification Policy," *Parameters* 35, no. 3 (Autumn 2005): 106-108.

trust between villagers and special operators after civilians were wounded or killed.[71] In response, the Joint United States Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) convened an investigative board in the summer of 1966 to determine the best way forward.[72] Two of its 81 recommendations were particularly telling.

The first recommended reforms to the Regional Forces (RF) and Popular Forces (PF). These units were comprised of men recruited from their own neighborhoods; RF troops operated at company strength in their home province and PFs in platoons in their villages. Although critical to counterinsurgency efforts at the local level, RF/PF (pronounced "Ruff-Puff" by Americans) soldiers suffered from poor training, limited logistical sustenance, sporadic fire support, and outdated weaponry, especially prior to 1966. The formation of CORDS helped legitimize the role RF/PF played in stopping VC incursions into small villages by recruiting and supplying more of the paramilitary troops. Because their presence posed a threat to insurgent support among the civilian populace, the RF/PF were prime targets of the VC; and battles between the two groups were fierce. Throughout the late 1960s, RF/PF forces received less than 20% of the South Vietnamese military budget; accounted for between 12-30% of all VC and NVA losses including those inflicted by the Americans; suffered more battlefield casualties than the South Vietnamese Army; and consumed only 2-4% of the total annual cost of the war.[73] Despite these hardships, unlike their counterparts in the army, RF/PF recruits deserted at a low rate—largely because they were defending the homes, villages, and districts in which they lived.[74] It is remarkable that MACV and the RVN invested so little in the two

---

[71] O. R. Smith, *Psychological Operations by USAF/VNAF in South Vietnam 1965-Jun 1968, Special Report*, US Air Force Project CHECO Report (Washington, DC: United States Air Force, 16 September 1968), 129-130.
[72] Historical Research Branch, MACV, *Command History 1966*, 520.
[73] Krepinovich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 219-221.
[74] William L. Stearman, "Lessons Learned From Vietnam," *Military Review* 90, no. 2 (March/April 2010): 110.

combat organizations that arguably had the best chance of affecting VC support in the countryside, did not require the massive firepower support enjoyed by the regular army, and represented a cost-effective method of killing enemy soldiers without as great a risk of unintended civilian casualties.

The second JUSPAO effort of note coincided with the final area of concentration for US and allied countries in South Vietnam from 1963 until the Tet Offensive: the work to reform the RVN government. Ngo Dinh Diem's assassination in 1963, just three weeks before President Kennedy's death, threw political control of the war into chaos. Although the United States transferred power to President Johnson without incident, the same was not true for the government in Saigon. There were six changes in leadership over the 18 months from November 1963 to May 1965. Three additional severe crises all but paralyzed the government.[75] The government stabilized in June of 1965 but did not regain even the appearance of civilian control until 1969 when a military regime maintained power by transitioning to a Social Democratic administration.[76] Throughout this period, however, American embassy and military officials were careful not to offend or overtly criticize South Vietnamese leaders due to the latters' cultural need to save face.

The United States routinely ignored repressive police measures and political arrests unless they attracted press attention.[77] The South Vietnamese national police, tasked with discovering and dismantling the Viet Cong infrastructure in big cities, were notoriously inept. This should not have been a surprise given that they had a lower priority for manpower, weapons, and supplies than the RF/PF. Pay was lower than the regular army and thus the police often recruited men of lesser

---

[75] Chandler, *War of Ideas*, 76.
[76] *The Pentagon Papers Volume II*, 285.
[77] *The Pentagon Papers Volume II*, 289.

ability.[78] In the second half of 1967 alone, 13 provincial police chiefs were replaced for corruption or inefficiency.[79] In this environment, the VC infrastructure remained largely intact and badly needed police reforms were disregarded until 1970 when it was too late.

RVN officials were notoriously corrupt, with MACV in 1968 complaining of a "conspicuous shortage of good Vietnamese leadership (both civil and military) at all levels of command." In the first half of that year, 44 provincial- and district-level officials were removed from office for corruption, reassignment, or "unknown" reasons.[80] For the most part, South Vietnamese heads of state were concerned far more with internal security than with the VC threat or the likelihood of a NVA invasion. Army officers were promoted based on favoritism or political influence, and received favorable performance reports for suffering fewer casualties than other commanders.[81] This created an incentive to avoid battle, thereby reducing the combat efficiency of affected South Vietnamese units.

Finally, by not grasping the plight of rural farmers, senior RVN officials demonstrated a failure to grasp the nature of the war they were fighting. Meanwhile, the VC focused on providing social and economic reform in the countryside.[82] The RVN failed to realize that the VC insurgency within its country fed on popular dissatisfaction with the government's actions and composition.[83] Most officials during the mid-1960s, including two presidents, one prime minister, and approximately 25% of South Vietnamese Army officers, were Catholics who had fled

---

[78] Krepinovich, *The Army and Vietnam*, 228.
[79] Historical Research Branch, Office of the Secretary, Joint Staff, MACV, *Command History, United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam, 1967 Volume II,* (Headquarters Department of the Army, Information Management Support Agency, Alexandria, Virginia, 1968), 620. Document is now declassified.
[80] Historical Research Branch, MACV, *Command History 1967 vol. II*, 562.
[81] Mintz, Silverberg, and Trinnaman, *Short Guide to Psychological Operations*, 41.
[82] Allan E. Goodman, "The Political Implications of Rural Problems in South Vietnam: Creating Public Interests," *Asian Survey* 10, no. 8 (August 1970): 676.
[83] Mintz, Silverberg, and Trinnaman, *Short Guide to Psychological Operations*, 43.

from North Vietnam when the communists seized control.[84] This created a split between the few Christian "outsiders" who held power and the largely Buddhist masses who felt abandoned by their government.

Although MACV's focus on defeating fielded formations of NVA and VC in South Vietnam had merit in 1964-1965 when the insurgency had enough strength to justify massing soldiers for assaults on cities, the communists wisely stopped using these tactics after American firepower demonstrated its effectiveness. After the VC reverted to guerrilla raids from sanctuaries in the jungle, MACV and the RVN failed to change their strategy to one that might separate the enemy from the South Vietnamese population. Neither government ever realized that if MACV's strategy had worked exactly as planned and the VC had been decisively defeated in combat, the RVN still would have been be viewed as corrupt, inept, and illegitimate in the eyes of most of its citizens. As David Kilcullen succinctly states, "if your strategy is to extend the reach of a government that is corrupt, abusive, ineffective, and alienates the people, then the better you execute that strategy the worse things are going to get."[85] In the case of South Vietnam, that is exactly what MACV was inadvertently doing.

This chapter explored the five primary categories of action taken by MACV and its South Vietnamese partners to combat the VC insurgency. First was the US focus on stopping the flow of men and logistics across the border. Shifting American troops to outposts near suspected transportation routes, coupled with air support and technical detection devices, inflicted casualties and complicated communist supply efforts. It also caused the US to keep its attention on hunting small bands of insurgents in the jungles away from major population centers. As the 1968 Tet Offensive loomed, General Vo Nguyen Giap purposely and

---

[84] Chandler, *War of Ideas*, 75.
[85] David Kilcullen, *Out of the Mountains: The Coming Age of the Urban Guerrilla* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 157.

repeatedly attacked Khe Sanh as a part of a strategy of pulling reinforcements away from South Vietnamese cities about to be assaulted by the Viet Cong.

This focus on interdiction had no effect on the ability of the RVN to rule justly because it was mainly a tactical decision with limited impact on government legitimacy (see Table 2 below for tabulated data for all five categories). It reduced the army's ability to provide security, as evidenced by the movement of American reinforcements away from cities prior to Tet. There was no appreciable change in indiscriminate measures due to the fact that the same unobserved firepower was used by MACV regardless of where the army fought.

The US and RVN attempted to locate VC and NVA in South Vietnam. The use of defoliants was especially irritating to civilian farmers. Unpredictable winds carried herbicides across mountains, destroying crops in unintended areas. The government promised reparations for accidental damages, but corrupt officials complicated the process and often required bribes to cut through red tape. MACV did not help the situation by focusing on the tactical benefits of defoliation, ignoring the harmful effects on popular support for the RVN and dismissing evidence of the program's failure, such as the steady increase of communist fighters crossing into South Vietnam each month. In all, the defoliation campaign did not change security protection in any appreciable way. It did, however, have a profoundly negative impact on the RVN's ability to rule justly and reduce indiscriminate measures.

When communist troops were discovered in the field, the US rarely hesitated to attack. MACV's primary strategy for winning the Vietnam War was one of attrition. Counting dead bodies, weapons, and supplies on the battlefield was how the Pentagon measured success or failure, thus placing a premium on employing whichever tactics were most likely to inflict heavy enemy casualties. The Americans, as well as their South Vietnamese protégés, typically turned to heavy doses of firepower to help

maneuver forces fighting in dense undergrowth. The concentrated use of aircraft, including army helicopter gunships, and artillery caused a steady stream of civilian casualties and destroyed homes. This was especially true when the army employed unobserved "harassment and interdiction" fires based on timing instead of direct observation of enemy troops. As a result of MACV's reliance on overwhelming firepower, the government's ability to rule justly, provide security to civilians, and reduce indiscriminate measures was diminished.

American and South Vietnamese intentions toward pacification were one of the few relatively bright spots in the war. Both governments recognized by 1965 that the program had failed, largely due to RVN disinterest. Three face-to-face meetings between US and RVN heads of state reinforced the importance of protecting the South Vietnamese population from communist influence. CORDS represented a strong first step toward coordinating actions by civilian and military organizations, thereby ideally reducing inefficiency of effort. Reform of the RF/PF forces was long overdue given their significant combat effectiveness, low desertion rates, strong incentive to defend their homes, and cheap operating costs. MACV would have been well served to change strategy from attrition of the enemy to one centered on supporting local paramilitary forces fighting to secure villages. In theory, the pacification program increased just rule by proving the RVN's interest in protecting its citizens. It also provided security and reduced indiscriminate measures by relying on RF/PF soldiers to protect South Vietnamese citizens where they lived.

Much of the pacification program, however, was undermined by a lack of government reform. Throughout the war, South Vietnamese officials and military officers were widely perceived as corrupt or incompetent. Inept leaders in Saigon focused on regime survival in a political environment where coups were commonplace, while ignoring the plight of civilians living in proximity to VC insurgents in the countryside.

The South Vietnamese Army promoted officers based on party allegiance and rewarded those who suffered few casualties. Thus, army officers were given incentives to use the same strategy of overwhelming firepower as MACV while minimizing activities that might result in combat with VC soldiers. American leaders, worried about a collapse of the RVN or a NVA invasion, proved willing to overlook government corruption while fighting for the survival of South Vietnam. As a result, serious RVN reform efforts did not materialize before the Tet Offensive exposed the flaws in the war's strategies.

Action	Rule Justly	Provide Security	Reduce Indiscriminate Measures
Border Security Focus	0	-1	0
Find VC (defoliation)	-1	0	-1
Fight w/Firepower	-1	-1	-1
Pacification	1	1	1
RVN Reform	-1	-1	-1

Table 2—Systems-Thinking Analysis of the Vietnam War 1964-1968
Source: Author's Original Work

Similarly, the systems-thinking model also illuminates many issues in the Vietnam War strategy enacted by MACV and the RVN. Emphasis on placing US combat forces near the borders was not inherently detrimental. Although it had a score of -1, it might have been the proper course of action if combined with a robust RF/PF paramilitary force capable of providing security in the population centers. Efforts to find VC in the jungles, such as defoliation, were more harmful to popular support. With a score of -2, this program was mismanaged by the RVN and often callously employed by the United States. As a result, the VC

gained a powerful propaganda tool while farmers impacted by herbicide use generally blamed the RVN for their hardships.

MACV's reliance on firepower in combat was strongly negative with a score of -3. Simply put, heavy use of unobserved artillery and airpower generally is not a good way to protect or earn popular support from civilians. Innocent casualties in war are impossible to avoid. This problem is exacerbated in an insurgency where guerrillas purposely blend into the population to hide in plain sight. Throughout the war, the United States went to great lengths to minimize unnecessary deaths, including subjecting its forces to restrictive rules of engagement. But MACV's use of body counts and the RVN's tendency to promote army personnel who minimized casualties created contradictory incentives.

Pacification efforts were rated a strong +3, but this was undermined by the -3 rating given to government reforms. Although the scores should cancel each other out, I give more weight to the poor record of RVN reform due to the negative influence corruption had not just on popular support, but on the pacification programs as well. For the most part, South Vietnamese politicians simply focused on regime survival more than protecting their citizens. American efforts to emphasize pacification were superficially agreed to by the RVN, but actions rarely reached the levels of commitment necessary to have an appreciable impact in Vietnamese population centers.

Overall, the systems-theory model analyzed American and RVN efforts in Vietnam as poor. The total score was -6. But, as noted above, I assessed the unsuccessful reform of the South Vietnamese government undermined the various pacification programs, thereby reducing just rule and the ability to provide security. Ultimately, the systems-theory framework indicates that both MACV and the RVN conducted a dysfunctional counterinsurgency campaign during the period from 1964 through early 1968. Analysis of counterinsurgency campaigns now shifts to the ongoing fight against ISIS.

Chapter 4

The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham

If there is to be support for Iraq, it has to be support for a government of Iraq that is a government of all the people and is representative of and responsive to all elements of Iraq…. This cannot be the United States being the air force for Shia militias or a Shia-on-Sunni Arab fight, it has to be a fight of all of Iraq against extremists who do happen to be Sunni extremists.
—*General David Petraeus, 18 June 2014*

Before analysis of American efforts against ISIS begins, a brief discussion of the validity of the systems-theory model is warranted. The greatest potential shortfall of this model is that it boils everything down to popular support. This is a suitable way to analyze counterinsurgency efforts because, in the end, popular support determines whether insurgents are likely to be supported or resisted by a region's citizens. The problem, however, is that popular support is difficult to gauge accurately. Insurgents often use violence against civilians to deter or punish those who cooperate with the government, and civil wars create strong incentives for preference falsification.[86] Thus, it is likely that some individuals gave the Hukbalahap or Viet Cong materiel support out of fear of the consequences of not cooperating. Similarly, repressive government officials can apply the same pressures, resulting in skewed perceptions of public enthusiasm for the regime. The systems-theory model fails to account for these possibilities, instead predicting a course of action's likelihood to increase or decrease general popular support. Furthermore, opinions can be swayed by much more than what a government does or fails to accomplish. Unlike the communist insurgencies studied thus far, ISIS relies on religious teachings to inspire and recruit its followers. People who truly believe that Abu Bakr al-

---

[86] Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 92-94.

Baghdadi is the first Islamic caliph since Kemal Ataturk abolished the position in 1924 are unlikely to turn away from ISIS merely because a government makes an effort not to hurt civilians. With that said, the systems-theory model is an adequate and appropriate way to examine ISIS provided the reader is aware that it is not entirely precise and may require adjustment for future developments.

When analyzing counterinsurgency actions against ISIS, one must consider why the movement receives so much support. America's efforts must be viewed through this lens because its invasion of Iraq in 2003 destabilized the region and led directly to conditions favorable for the creation of ISIS. History is immensely important to Muslims, particularly in this part of the world. Analysis of ISIS must start at the beginning.

The full history of Islam, including the split between Sunnis and Shia, is well documented and beyond the scope of this thesis. An important distinction to make with regard to Iraq is that the country is not actually divided into Shia, Sunni, and Kurdish areas. Comparing Kurdish people to groupings based on the two branches of Islam is misleading because the Kurds are not a religious group. In fact, 98% of the Kurds living in Iraq in 2014 identified as Sunni.[87] Thus, while it is technically correct to state that Sunni Iraqis under Saddam Hussein persecuted the Kurds, Hussein likely did not do so for religious reasons. Hussein's well-documented repression of resistance flowed from the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire after World War I.

The Sykes-Picot agreement of May 1916 assumed the Ottoman Empire would collapse, and it divided the "sick man of Europe's" lands in the modern Middle East between France and Britain. The British, interested in securing newly discovered oil deposits and retaining naval control over the Persian Gulf, shrewdly combined the Ottoman provinces

---

[87] Besheer Mohamed, "Who are the Iraqi Kurds?" Pew Research Center, 20 August 2014, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/08/20/who-are-the-iraqi-kurds/ (accessed 22 March 2016).

of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul into one colony. As they do today, Basra contained mostly Shia Arabs, Baghdad Sunni Arabs, and Mosul Sunni Kurds. Each province was ruled primarily by tribal leaders and the British empowered a Sunni monarch, then, as now, the minority group, to administer the entire colony.[88] Iraq gained its independence in 1932 but was occupied by the United Kingdom during World War II due to its strategic oil and geographic importance. The Iraqi monarchy fell during a coup in 1958, and the Ba'ath Party ultimately came to power in 1968. Hussein became president in 1979 and fought a disastrous war with Iran from 1980-1988, during which he shifted the Ba'ath Party away from socialism by using an Islamic revival to rally his subjects. The Hussein regime routinely crushed dissent, including the use of poisonous gas attacks against the Kurds in 1988.[89] The American invasion in 2003 removed the Hussein regime and oversaw elections that brought a majority Shia government to Baghdad.

Under Sykes-Picot, neighboring Syria also had a minority sect ruling over a dissenting majority, but its path was much different. Syria became a colony that was declared independent and then reoccupied by the French armed forces during World War II. After a series of coups in the 1950s, Syria combined with Egypt to form a short-lived country called the United Arab Republic. In 1963 a Ba'athist cabinet seized power, and in 1971 Hafez al-Assad was elected president. Despite being fellow Ba'athists, the Syrian government had an antagonistic relationship with the Iraqi regime. Syria supported Iran during the Iran-Iraq war and sided with the United States during the 1991 Gulf War. Bashar al-Assad came to power in 2000 and continued the rule of the Shia Alawite minority, of which he was a member. Following the US invasion of Iraq

[88] Roby C. Barrett, *The Collapse of Iraq and Syria: The End of the Colonial Construct in the Greater Levant* (MacDill Air Force Base, FL: The Joint Special Operations University Press, 2016), 26-30.

[89] BBC News, "Iraq Profile—Timeline," 9 December 2015, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14546763 (accessed 22 March 2016).

in 2003, Syria publicly denied it was allowing insurgents and supplies to cross its border into Iraq while clandestinely permitting such movement. The Syrian civil war started in March 2011 after security forces fired on protesters during the Arab Spring. It was this conflict that led to a breakdown of government control over the eastern part of Syria. The organization that came to be known as ISIS exploited this vacuum for use as a safe haven before reemerging as a potent military threat.[90]

ISIS traces its heritage to al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). A terrorist organization led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda in 2004 and renamed itself AQI. Under Zarqawi's brutal leadership, AQI fought against Americans but also frequently attacked Iraqi Shiites in an effort to provoke sectarian civil war. Zarkawi's death in 2006 did little to slow the violence until the Sunni Awakening, which coincided with a surge in US armed forces, temporarily reduced AQI's battlefield effectiveness.[91] In an effort to dispel its image in Iraq as a foreign terrorist organization, AQI changed its name to the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) in October 2006. While ISI regrouped after Zarqawi's death, Shia militias benefited from expertise and bomb-making materiel from Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps—Quds Force.[92]

The Quds Force is an elite military organization that serves as Iranian sectarian special forces. Its leader, Major General Qassem Suleimani, has commanded this unit for more than a decade and has shaped it into a formidable battlefield force. The Quds Force established smuggling routes through Kurdish territory into Syria, provided soldiers to al-Assad to buttress the Syrian army, organized a network for transporting explosively formed projectile bombs capable of piercing American armor into Iraq, and has attempted attacks in countries as far

---

[90] BBC News, "Syria Profile—Timeline," 29 February 2016, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14703995 (accessed 22 March 2016).
[91] *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)" http://www.britannica.com/al-qaeda-in-iraq (accessed 22 March 2016).
[92] Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror* (New York, NY: Regan Arts, 2015), 53-54.

away as Thailand. Quds operators, responsible for killing US soldiers during Operation Iraqi Freedom, continue to serve alongside government forces in Iraq today.[93]

By far the greatest reason for the rise of ISIS, however, was the dysfunctional policies of the Iraqi government under Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. Maliki, a Shia politician who spent time in Syria and Iran after fleeing Iraq in 1979, came to power in 2006 as the anti-American insurgency spiraled out of control and President George W. Bush voiced his displeasure with the first Iraqi prime minister. Under Malaki's reign, Sunni militia participating in the Awakening program often had to be protected by American soldiers to keep the now Shia-dominated Iraqi army from killing them. Maliki sought and received adequate support from Iran to turn Iraq into a sectarian state, while paying lip service to the Americans' reform recommendations. Conditions for the Sunni deteriorated further after the majority of American troops withdrew in 2011.[94] By this time, as many as 40% of ISI's soldiers were Sunni Awakening members who had defected after the Iraqi government stopped paying their salaries.[95] Both Shia and Sunni in Iraq patiently waited for the last American soldiers to leave in 2011.

Over the next four years, ISI operated from the Sunni regions of both Iraq and Syria (see Figure 4) as sectarian violence exploded and Syria descended into civil war. ISI took advantage of widespread fear of and disaffection with the Iraqi Shia government among the Sunni population to gain popular support. On 8 April 2013 ISI's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, declared that his organization would merge with Syria-based al-Qaeda resistance group al-Nusra to form the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). Surprised by this action, al-Nusra refused to come under Baghdadi's leadership, and the two sides argued publicly

---

[93] Dexter Filkins, "The Shadow Commander," *The New Yorker,* 30 September 2013, http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/09/30/the-shadow-commander.
[94] Barrett, *The Collapse of Iraq and Syria*, 83-87.
[95] Weiss and Hassan, *ISIS*, 91.

until the summer when al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri ordered ISIS to be dissolved back into its Iraqi and Syrian components. Baghdadi acted quickly, declaring Zawahiri to be a defender of the Sykes-Picot agreement. Al-Qaeda formally broke ties with ISIS on 2 February 2014, an act punctuated when ISIS conquered Mosul and captured a significant quantity of military materiel in June.[96]

On 29 June 2014 Baghdadi declared the formation of the Islamic State before giving a public sermon in Mosul's Great Mosque a few days later. He claimed the title of Caliph, or leader, of all of Islam and called on other Sunni governments and militia groups to pledge loyalty to him.[97] Simultaneously, ISIS soldiers approached the outskirts of Baghdad and seized Tikrit as Shia citizens rushed to join the Iraqi army. The United States responded to Iraq's request for help first by deploying advisers and security personnel, and later with limited airstrikes in August 2014.[98] Since then, America has significantly increased airstrikes and suffered two combat fatalities in Iraq as part of the campaign against ISIS. The resulting situation currently faced by America and its allies is confusing. Figure 4 shows the ethnic breakdown of the region—the reader should pay particular attention to areas of mixed ethnicity such as around Baghdad. Figure 5 displays the tactical situation as it existed on 3 March 2016. It is important to remember that much of western Iraq is open desert. Stopping the flow of ISIS men and materiel across this featureless terrain remains extremely difficult, and that landscape is a key reason why ISIS soldiers tend to appear out of nowhere when attacking Iraqi positions

---

[96] Weiss and Hassan, *ISIS*, 183-187, 196-197.
[97] Alissa J. Rubin, "Militant Leader in Rare Appearance in Iraq," *The New York Times*, 5 July 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/06/world/asia/iraq-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-sermon-video.html?_r=0.
[98] Micah Zenko, "Your Official Mission Creep Timeline of the US War in Syria," *Foreign Policy*, 19 October 2015, http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/10/19/official-mission-creep-timeline-us-war-in-syria-obama-administration/ (accessed 22 March 2016).
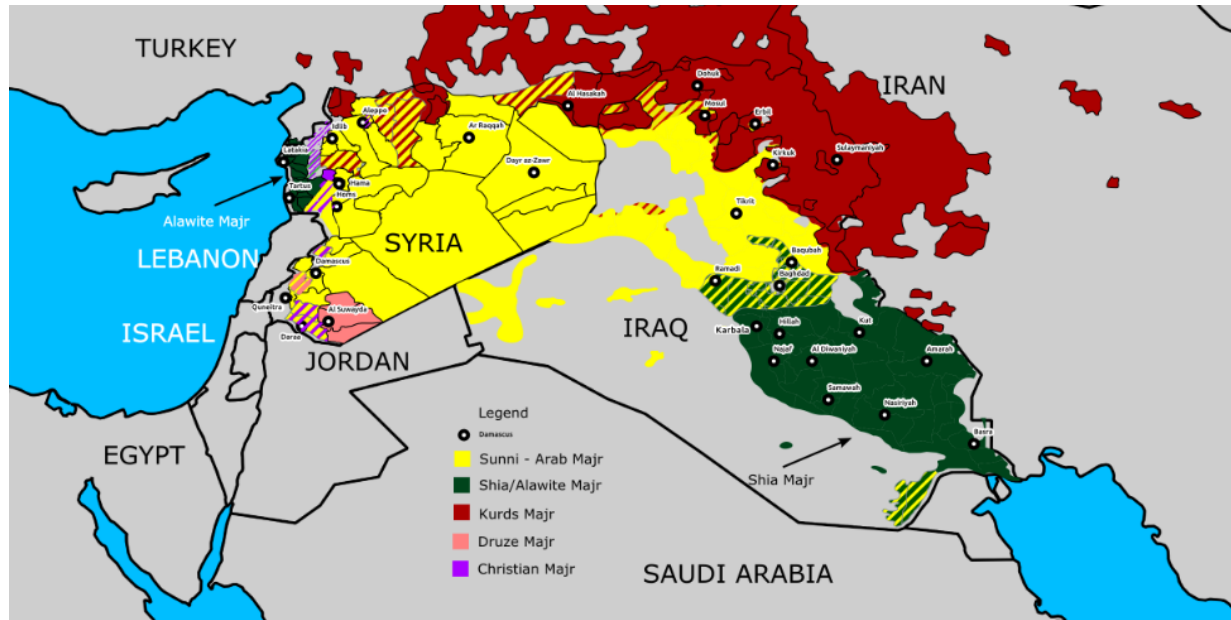
Figure 4—Ethnic Composition of Syria and Iraq
Source: Giacomo Goldkorn, "Syria and Iraq Main Ethnic and Religious Groups," 22 February 2015, http://www.geopoliticalatlas.org/syria-and-iraq-main-ethnic-and-religious-groups/ (accessed 22 March 2016).
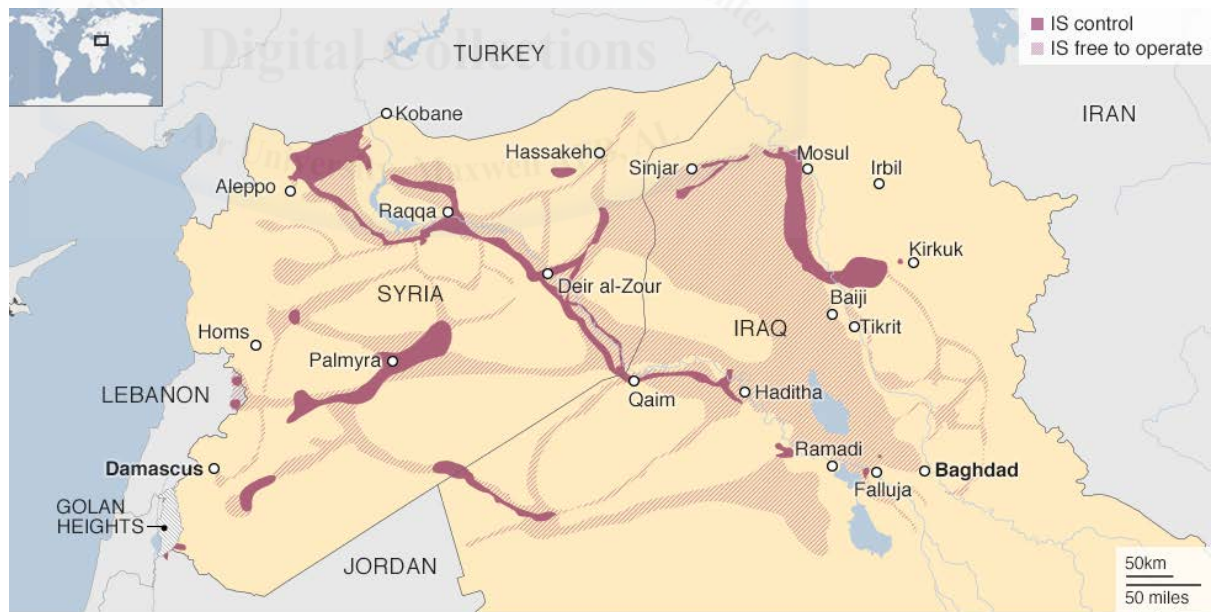

Figure 5—Areas of ISIS Control
Source: BBC News, "Islamic State Group: Crisis in Seven Charts," 15 March 2016, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27838034 (accessed 22 March 2016).

As noted in Chapter One, the US State Department met with NATO allies in 2014 and developed five LOEs for fighting ISIS. They are provide military support to our partners, impede the flow of foreign fighters to ISIS, stop ISIS's financing and funding, address humanitarian crises in the region, and expose ISIS's true nature. These LOEs will now be examined in detail to analyze America's efforts to combat ISIS.

The most visible aspect of the first LOE, provide military support to our partners, is the American-led air campaign against ISIS. During this effort, labeled Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR), the US Department of Defense claims to have conducted more than 8,300 strikes in Iraq and Syria with another 3,400 carried out by coalition forces. The United States has flown 86,058 sorties at a cost of about $11.4M per day. In sum, OIR has destroyed 139 tanks, 374 Humvees, 1,162 staging areas, 5,894 buildings, 7,118 fighting positions, 1,272 oil infrastructure targets, and 6,820 other targets. Approximately 60% of American airstrikes have occurred in Iraq, compared to 91% of coalition attacks that have struck there.[99] This data does not include operations conducted by Iraqi air forces.

The United States has also established six training locations in Iraq. As of 21 March 2016, OIR member nations are teaching 2,822 Iraqi soldiers and another 19,962 have completed training.[100] These numbers, however, are relatively insignificant when one considers that in August 2011 the US Army counted nearly 200,000 trained Iraqi soldiers, plus another 325,000 police.[101] Following ISIS's victories in Mosul and

[99] US Department of Defense, "Operation Inherent Resolve: Targeted Operations Against ISIL Terrorists," http://www.defense.gov/news/special-reports/0814_Inherent-Resolve (accessed 23 March 2016).
[100] Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve Facebook Page, "Building Partner Capacity," 21 March 2016, https://www.facebook.com/CJTFOIR/photos/a.1645118859087582.1073741955.1489102498022553/1676411129291688/?type=3&theater (accessed 23 March 2016).
[101] Anthony H. Cordesman, Sam Khazai, and Daniel Dewit, *Shaping Iraq's Security Forces*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 16 December 2013, http://csis.org/files/publication/131213_Iraq_Security_Forces.pdf, 4.

near Baghdad, the army has swelled to 250,000 members with fewer than 10% having received training. This is partially due to significant numbers of Shia who rushed to volunteer for the army as ISIS approached Baghdad, but also has much to do with the Iraqi government not providing recruits to OIR-sponsored training centers in a timely manner.[102] Troops who are trained are typically poorly supplied, a fact ISIS has repeatedly exploited, especially in the battles for Mosul and Ramadi. At present, the Iraqi army remains unable to conduct large combat operations without considerable logistic and air support from other countries.

The second LOE involves impeding the flow of foreign fighters to ISIS. Testimony from the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) in 2015 estimated that more than 20,000 individuals had traveled to Syria from 90 countries since 2011. This rate was higher than the rate of insurgents who entered Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen, or Somalia at any time in the previous decade. Although not all of these foreign fighters went to Syria to join ISIS, many did help ISIS increase its strength to between 20,000 and 31,500 members. To combat this, the NCTC collaborated with the Departments of State and Homeland Security to create the Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment (TIDE), an analytic database that allows counterterrorism officials to compile data about possible terrorists, track their movement toward the Middle East, and disseminate this information to law enforcement agencies in other countries.[103] This year the White House claimed credit for a modest reduction in the number of foreign fighters joining ISIS. Still, approximately 6,000 foreigners took up arms in the

---

[102] Caitlin Talmadge and Austin Long, "Why the US (Still) Can't Train the Iraqi Military," *The Washington Post*, 22 September 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/09/22/why-the-u-s-still-cant-train-the-iraqi-military/ (accessed 23 March 2016).
[103] Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Testimony by the Honorable Nicholas J. Rasmussen, Director National Counterterrorism Center, 12 February 2015, http://www.nctc.gov/docs/current_terrorist_threat_to_the_United_States.pdf.

final quarter of 2015, bringing the total number to 36,500 combatants from other countries. This number includes 250 American and 700 British citizens who have at least attempted to travel to the Middle East, with more than 100 having been killed by government forces on the battlefield.[104] One positive note is that more countries have recognized the threat posed by ISIS not just to the Middle East, but also to the rest of the world due to its propensity to export terrorism. More than 30 countries have passed legislation in line with a United Nations Security Council resolution aimed at sharing intelligence, increasing prosecutions of potential insurgents, and hindering travel to territory controlled by ISIS.[105] This cooperation must continue to sever ISIS from a primary source of manpower.

The third LOE is to stop ISIS's financing and funding. When ISIS occupied Mosul, it was making more than $2M per day by selling oil on the black market. ISIS also receives money from Arab donors, taxing its subjects, administering fines for transgressions against Sharia law, and collecting ransom for kidnap victims.[106] Although the US Department of the Treasury estimated ISIS oil income at $100M per year in 2015, some financial experts believed it to be as high as $500M annually. This wealth is in addition to the nearly $1B it seized in 2014 from banks in captured Iraqi cities. Furthermore, ISIS now controls significant fertile farmland that American warplanes are unlikely to attack due to the degradation on international support of appearing to starve civilians.

---

[104] Ken Dilanian, "US Says It's Slowing Flow, But Foreign Fighters Still Flock to ISIS," *NBC News*, 16 January 2016, http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/u-s-says-it-s-slowing-flow-foreign-fighters-still-n494281 (accessed 23 March 2016).
[105] Lisa O. Monaco, "Here's What You Need to Know About Our Strategy to Defeat ISIL," 19 November 2015, https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2015/11/19/heres-what-you-need-know-about-our-strategy-defeat-isil (accessed 23 March 2016).
[106] S.B., "The Economist Explains: Where Islamic State Gets Its Money," *The Economist*, 4 January 2015, http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2015/01/economist-explains (accessed 23 March 2016).

Wheat and barley alone could net up to $200M per year, even if sold on black markets.[107]

Since President Obama authorized airstrikes against ISIS positions in 2014, the United States and its allies have focused much of their effort on degrading ISIS's financial assets. Named after the World War II operation targeting German-controlled oil fields in Romania, Operation Tidal Wave II reduced ISIS oil production by an estimated 30% by deliberately attacking larger facilities that require technical expertise and specialized equipment to repair.[108] Although this probably complicates post-war repairs, it means that the United States has determined that hindering ISIS's financial situation is worth the future cost of restoring Iraqi and Syrian oil infrastructure. Another aspect of the financial war was evident when American aircraft attacked a bank in Mosul in which post-strike video footage clearly showed money fluttering high in the air. US officials would not speculate on how much or what kind of currency was destroyed, but one spokesman put the value in the millions.[109] Four additional bank facilities, described as financial storage and distribution centers, were destroyed in a series of midnight airstrikes in February 2016. Although a local watchdog group claimed that the banks were empty and called upon US forces to stop targeting "civil sites" not controlled by ISIS, these attacks suggest that the OIR coalition received intelligence from a source close enough to the locations to provide

---

[107] Cam Simpson and Matthew Philips, "Why US Efforts to Cut Off Islamic State's Funds Have Failed," *Bloomberg Businessweek*, 19 November 2015, http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-11-19/why-u-s-efforts-to-cut-off-islamic-state-s-funds-have-failed (accessed 23 March 2016).
[108] Patrick B. Johnston, "The Islamic State's Money Problems," The RAND Corporation, 5 March 2016, http://www.rand.org/blog/2016/03/the-islamic-states-money-problems.html (accessed 23 March 2016).
[109] Fox News, "Video Shows US Airstrikes Obliterating Islamic State Cash Stockpile in Mosul," 16 January 2016, http://www.foxnews.com/world/2016/01/16/video-shows-us-airstrike-obliterating-islamic-state-cash-stockpile-in-mosul.html (accessed 23 March 2016).

accurate targeting data.[110]   Finally, the United States has continued to work within the United Nations (U.N.) to facilitate international cooperation necessary to impede the flow of money from international donors to ISIS.

Unfortunately, due to ISIS's opaque nature it is difficult to assess its financial situation clearly. Financial experts disagree on how much funding ISIS brings in from other countries, with some saying the organization makes most of its money through taxation without relying on foreign donors.[111]   The British government found that while ISIS's oil revenue was down 40% as of March 2016, donations from Gulf states had stopped completely. Efforts to deny ISIS direct access to international money exchange markets in Iraq and Jordan also had achieved success, although this is much harder due to the Islamic financial mechanism known as hawala. Hawala uses "an informal network of brokers" to utilize financial assets for profit in markets without funds physically leaving or entering ISIS's territory.[112]   This system circumvents government controls and is much harder to interdict. Regardless of how ISIS funds its war effort, the economic aspect of the international campaign must continue.

The fourth LOE is the effort to alleviate humanitarian crises in the region. On 4 February 2016, Secretary of State John Kerry announced $600M in additional humanitarian funding for the Middle East, bringing total donations from the United States to more than $5.1B since 2012. There are currently 6.5 million people internally displaced in Syria and

---

[110] Jack Moore, "US-led Coalition Targets ISIS Banks in Mosul Strikes," *Newsweek*, 15 February 2016, http://www.newsweek.com/us-led-coalition-targets-isis-banks-mosul-strikes-426604 (accessed 23 March 2016).

[111] Jose Pagliery, "Inside the $2 Billion ISIS War Machine, *CNN Money*, 11 December 2015, http://money.cnn.com/2015/12/06/news/isis-funding/ (accessed 27 March 2016).

[112] Patrick Wintour, ed., "Oil Revenue Collapse Means ISIS Reliant on Gulf Funds, Inquiry Hears," *The Guardian*, 8 March 2016, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/08/oil-revenue-collapse-isis-reliant-gulf-funds-inquiry-hears (accessed 27 March 2016).

3.3 million in Iraq, with a further 7 million requiring some degree of humanitarian assistance due to the conflict. Millions of refugees have fled their native countries for camps in Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, and Iraq, or have fled to Europe or other continents seeking asylum.[113] According to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, funding requirements for the Syrian region in 2016 are more than $4.5B with a mere $335M donated so far.[114] Although many people with the ability to flee fighting in Iraq and Syria have already left, ISIS's battlefield resilience suggests that displaced persons will not return to their homes anytime soon. Many simply do not have homes to return to due to battle damage and Iraq's inability to pay for major infrastructure repairs.[115] Thus, displaced individuals will require international support for years to come.

Finally, the fifth LOE is to expose ISIS's true nature. The United States realizes that ISIS cannot be defeated on the battlefield alone; its extreme, fundamentalist Islamic ideology must be discredited to stop its message from continuing to spread. Muslim scholars refuted ISIS speeches point-by-point in September 2015, and the highest religious authority in Saudi Arabia declared that ISIS could not claim to be part of the Islamic faith. Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and the US worked together to share best practices for combating ISIS propaganda in several

---

[113] USAID, "Syria Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #2," 4 February 2016, https://www.usaid.gov/crisis/syria/fy16/fs02 (accessed 23 March 2016) and USAID, "Iraq—Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #2, Fiscal Year 2016," 4 March 2016, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/iraq_ce_fs02_03-04-2016.pdf (accessed 23 March 2016).
[114] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Syria Regional Refugee Response," 22 March 2016, http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php (accessed 23 March 2016).
[115] Stephen Kalin and Ahmed Rasheed, "Iraq's Troubled Finances Slow Efforts to Rebuild Ramadi," *Reuters*, 9 February 2016, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-ramadi-idUSKCN0VI0OU (accessed 23 March 2016).

forms of mass communication.[116] The US State Department's direct messaging efforts, however, have not been as well conceived.

President Obama established the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC) on 9 September 2011. The CSCC had three components focused on disseminating intelligence to communicators, using this information to create effective counters to terrorist narratives, and a creating digital outreach team that directly engaged with potential extremists on social media.[117] The outreach team made national headlines with its "think again, turn away" campaign in which it argued with Muslims on Facebook and Twitter. This frequently backfired by giving individuals with relatively few followers a chance to gain notoriety by advocating ISIS's talking points in front of the State Department's 7,300 followers.[118] On 25 February 2016, President Obama formed the Global Engagement Center (GEC) and directed it to "lift up voices that expose ISI[S] as the murders that they are—killers of innocent Muslim men, women, and children."[119] The State Department's digital outreach team shut down its Twitter campaign in March 2016 and joined the GEC. It is not yet clear how the State Department will execute the president's directive to work with high-tech leaders from Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter while using young people to counter ISIS's propaganda online.

Additionally, on 17 March 2016 Secretary Kerry announced that ISIS was responsible for committing genocide against minorities in the

[116] Brett McGurk, Deputy Special Presidential Envoy to the Coalition to Counter ISIL, Statement for the Record to the House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing, "Countering ISIL: Are We Making Progress," 10 December 2015, http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA00/20141210/102785/HHRG-113-FA00-Wstate-McGurkB-20141210.pdf.
[117] US Department of State, "Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications," http://www.state.gov/r/cscc/ (accessed 23 March 2016).
[118] Rita Katz, "The State Department's Twitter War With ISIS Is Embarrassing," *Time*, 16 September 2014, http://time.com/3387065/isis-twitter-war-state-department/ (accessed 23 March 2016).
[119] President Barack H. Obama, "Remarks by the President on Progress Against ISIL," 25 February 2016, https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/02/25/remarks-president-progress-against-isil (accessed 23 March 2016).

territory it controls, including Yezidis, Christians, and Shia Muslims. Kerry declared that the United States would not act unilaterally to stop the genocide, but would strongly support an unspecified independent investigation that ideally would culminate in prosecution in a "competent court or tribunal."[120] The use of the term genocide could potentially be used in the U.N. to authorize the use of force under Article VIII of the Genocide Convention. This article states that the international community may be called upon to take whatever action is deemed necessary to stop atrocities.[121] Others noted, however, that off-the-record State Department officials were quick to assert that this declaration did not commit the United States to taking further action against ISIS.[122] It is too soon to determine what effect, if any, this will have on U.N. support for additional military action in Iraq.

The above description has recounted past and ongoing efforts in support of the US State Department's five LOEs for defeating ISIS. The analysis that follows scores those efforts in accordance with the previously used format. The first LOE, providing military support to our partners, is necessary due to how weak the Iraqi armed forces were especially after Mosul fell and ISIS columns advanced on Baghdad in 2014. Using coalition personnel to train Iraq's army and police should increase security, although by how much remains unclear considering that the US evidently trained Iraqi forces for the better part of eight years to mixed avail and now has fewer resources deployed with which to work. Nevertheless, this LOE is rated as a 1 for provide security because

---

[120] John Kerry, Secretary of State, "Remarks on Daesh and Genocide," 17 March 2016, http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/03/254782.htm (accessed 23 March 2016).

[121] Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 9 December 1948, https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume78/volume-78-I-1021-English.pdf (accessed 23 March 2016).

[122] William McGurn, "Calling it Genocide Won't Stop It: Now That It's Been Labeled, How About a Strategy to End the ISIS Slaughter?" *The Wall Street Journal*, 21 March 2016, http://www.wsj.com/articles/calling-it-genocide-wont-stop-it-1458602096 (accessed 27 March 2016).

reinvigorated Iraqi security forces are required to protect civilians from ISIS. The LOE does not, however, have an effect on just rule or reducing indiscriminate measures and both are scored as zeros (see table 3 for scores of all LOEs). As noted previously, the discriminatory and repressive actions of the al-Malaki government produced feelings of hostility among the Sunni minority, a practice that current Prime Minister Haidi al-Abadi has not significantly reversed. Iraqi armed forces may develop into a competent counterinsurgency force; but if they continue to be dominated by Shia officers who treat Sunnis with hostility, popular support for ISIS or some other resistance organization will continue.

The second LOE is scored exactly the same as the first. Impeding the flow of foreign fighters to ISIS does nothing to alter the nature of the Iraqi government or to reduce indiscriminate measures. Both categories score zero. The LOE scores a 1 for providing security because foreign fighters typically are the most violent members of ISIS. These individuals comprise most of ISIS's suicide bombers, include hardened combat veterans from other Islamic insurgencies, and carry out most atrocities such as beheadings.[123] Severing ISIS from foreign fighters is as important as ensuring ISIS veterans in the Middle East intent on carrying out terrorist attacks do not travel to other countries.

The third LOE, stop ISIS's financing and funding, scores a zero for just rule and providing security. Severing the flow of money into the would-be caliphate may actually degrade security because ISIS has already resorted to taxing and stealing from civilians to pay for its war expenses. Conversely, this LOE may also improve security by forcing ISIS to be unable to afford what it requires for continued military operations. Thus, the score is zero. The targeting of civilian oil and banking infrastructure, however, scores a -1 for reducing indiscriminate

---

[123] McGurk, Testimony to the House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing, 10 December 2015.

measures. Although the coalition's ability to target banks full of cash strongly suggests the presence of some degree of intelligence gathering capability, civilian casualties are unavoidable when striking targets in congested cities. American rules of engagement significantly limit this risk, but it simply is too dangerous to use special forces or other means to destroy these targets. The use of airpower always includes the threat of collateral damage.

The fourth LOE, addressing humanitarian crises in the region, represents a relatively optimistic development. Recent migration controversies in Europe and the United States notwithstanding, the US and coalition countries have contributed billions of dollars to humanitarian support in the region. More can and should be done to alleviate suffering and find a permanent solution to the issue, but this effort scores a 1 for providing security because refugees do have someplace to go when fleeing violence. The humanitarian effort does not, however, address the Iraqi government's just rule or indiscriminate measures. Due to political and economic reasons, Baghdad simply is not yet capable of providing a safe environment for non-Shias or rebuilding areas recaptured from ISIS. Both categories score zero.

Finally, the fifth LOE appears either misguided or misnamed because nobody is better at exposing ISIS's true nature than ISIS itself. The organization is adept at pushing its message to the world through social media and professionally produced videos and publications. These communications are full of violent and gruesome images in which ISIS proclaims its atrocities are justified by the Koran and necessary to shorten the war while hastening the apocalypse. Sunni Muslims are unlikely to be swayed by US State Department tweets or strongly worded U.N. speeches while caught between battling Shia militias and ISIS fundamentalists somewhere in Iraq. Discrediting ISIS's claim of being Islam's legitimate caliphate is immensely important, but that cannot be done overtly by the United States. Just as the Pope would not entertain

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's arguments that Catholics have misunderstood God's wishes by not becoming Muslims, it is not hard to imagine what Baghdadi's followers think when President Obama or other western non-Muslim heads of state lecture about how ISIS has misinterpreted Islam. Instead, this LOE should probably be amended. The US must continue to support Muslim countries willing to dispute the legality of the ISIS caliphate, but it also must use every available persuasive tool to convince Prime Minister al-Abadi to reform the Iraqi government into one that productively shares power among Shias, Sunnis, and Kurds. If this proves infeasible, Iraq's ability to survive as a nation that functionally controls its pre-war borders will require further analysis. But as it currently stands, this LOE has no impact on any of the three categories addressed in the systems-theory model.

Action	Rule Justly	Provide Security	Reduce Indiscriminate Measures
Provide Military Support to Partners	0	1	0
Impede Flow of Foreign Fighters	0	1	0
Stop ISIS's Finances & Funding	0	0	-1
Address Humanitarian Crises	0	1	0
Expose ISIS's True Nature	0	0	0

Table 3—Systems-Thinking Analysis of ISIS
Source: Author's Original Work

As Table 3 illustrates, America's LOEs for fighting ISIS are largely ineffective. None of the LOEs address the unjust nature of the Iraqi government. The United States seems to be willing to turn a blind eye to the continued sectarianism of Iraq and its security forces, possibly because it is more important to retain basing and overflight rights

required to conduct the air campaign attack ISIS. This sectarianism, however, began and flourished at the height of the American occupation and continued unabated after US troops left in 2011. Although General Petraeus was wisely concerned about Americans serving as the Iraqi Shia air force, the United States effectively has done exactly that for nearly a decade. The second category earned an overall score of 3 because security is an immediate and overriding concern for the OIR coalition and the Iraqi government. More needs to be done, but the data indicate that the US is on the right track here. Finally, reducing indiscriminate measures scored a -1 due to the heavy reliance on airstrikes. To be fair, rules of engagement and the professionalism of American and coalition pilots do reduce the risk of collateral damage. Nevertheless, striking targets in cities far behind ISIS's lines poses an inherent danger to civilians.

Overall, the LOEs received a cumulative score of 2. Thus, the United States and its allies are having a very limited positive effect on popular support for ISIS in Iraq. Similar to the situation in Vietnam, the US is in danger of continuing to expend blood and treasure in support of a corrupt and possibly unredeemable government. That scenario is precisely how Operation Iraqi Freedom ended, and Operation Inherent Resolve is currently following in the same footsteps. If popular support is critical to the success or failure of an insurgency, and if the Shia-dominated repressive government policies of Nouri al-Malaki and Haidi al-Abadi are prime reasons why many Sunnis are willing to tolerate ISIS in Iraq, then the United States must focus its efforts on altering the nature of the Iraqi regime. The five LOEs as agreed upon by NATO almost totally fail to address this issue.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

There is no political architecture that will convince any Sunni over the age of three that he or she has a future with the Iraqi state. The administration is trying to use a limited military weapon to defeat an adversary that only a political offensive can overcome, and we're not able or willing to make that effort.
—David Crocker, Former US Ambassador to Iraq, 12 Feb 2016

The situation in ISIS's territory remains fluid. Iraqi armed forces are advancing toward Mosul but are meeting fierce resistance. The second American fatality of the ISIS campaign, a US Marine, was recently killed in a rocket attack on an outpost just south of that city.[124] Even as fighting continues, the United States must look to the future to determine its objectives in Iraq. This thesis illustrates the differences between strategies used in the Philippines, Vietnam, and Iraq against ISIS (Table 4). Although a high score in one column does not counteract a low score in another, taken together the analysis shows the overall likelihood of success or failure.

Action	Rule Justly	Provide Security	Reduce Indiscriminate Measures
Hukbalahap	7	5	3
Vietnam War	-2	-2	-2
ISIS	0	3	-1

Table 4—Summary of Systems-Thinking Analysis
Source: Author's Original Work

---

[124] Jim Miklaszewski and Courtney Kube, "US Marine Killed, Three Others Injured by ISIS Rocket in Iraq," *NBC News*, 19 March 2016, http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/u-s-marine-killed-three-others-injured-isis-rocket-iraq-n541871 (accessed 1 April 2016).

Counterinsurgency efforts in the Philippines were quite likely to reduce popular support for the Hukbalahap, whereas the Viet Cong were able to gain significant popular support due to the RVN's inept policies, and the United States' ISIS strategy seems largely ineffective.

The American campaign against ISIS is much more comparable to its role in the Vietnam War than in the Hukbalahap insurgency. In the Philippines, primary counterinsurgency efforts were undertaken by the Filipino government and its armed forces with little direct US intervention. Conversely, American direct involvement in Vietnam was central to the war effort at several key periods, but defeat ultimately stemmed from the RVN's inability to enact the reforms necessary to provide physical security and just governance to its citizens. Conditions similar to Vietnam currently exist in Iraq. By themselves, military actions by the United States and its allies against ISIS are unlikely to change the political nature of the Iraqi regime. Persecuted by the antagonistic Shia Iraqi government, many Sunnis will continue to face a stark choice between repression by hostile militias, emigration, or supporting ISIS and enduring its brutality in exchange for near-term security. From this perspective, there are several implications for future American military strategy.

The United States should evaluate exactly what it wants the region to look like in the future. Defeating ISIS in Iraq may be more likely since the expansion of American intervention, but exactly who will control Sunni population centers and how those residents will be treated after the war ends remains to be seen. So far, the Iraqi government has demonstrated an abysmal record of providing security and just governance in Sunni areas, although larger cities such as Mosul may force Iraq to rebuild faster due to international attention.[125] The US and

---

[125] Patrick Cockburn, "Life Under ISIS: Sunnis Face an Even Bleaker Future in Iraq if the Militants' Reign of Terror is Finally Defeated," *Independent*, 18 March 2015, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/life-under-isis-sunnis-face-

its allies should be less concerned with tactical battlefield victories and more interested in shaping what type of organization will replace ISIS as the defender of Sunni citizens. It is important to remember that since 2003 many Sunni Iraqis suffered attacks by al-Qaeda in Iraq, turned against insurgents during the Awakening, were persecuted by the Malaki government, and are now being ruled by ISIS. Thus, it is unwise to assume that everyone in ISIS territory yearns to remain there. Sunnis who cooperate with ISIS may do so in solidarity with the movement's cause, or they could be remaining in place due to a lack of viable alternatives. The United States should work with government leaders throughout the region to create viable options for disaffected Sunnis. Otherwise, the previous analysis suggests that Iraqi governmental persecution may continue to foster Sunni resistance, typically asserting itself in the form of insurgency or terrorism. As they currently exist, American military efforts are unlikely to alter this possibility.

Additionally, the United States should learn from its Vietnam experience and consider using its air support as a means to compel the Iraqi government to develop a solution to its perceived inability to govern Sunni citizens justly. ISIS will eventually wither and die if it does not have popular support from Sunnis in Iraq. If the Iraqi armed forces rely on air support from American and coalition partners, the United States should exploit this dependence to urge Iraqi government reforms. American leaders probably fear pushing Iraq into an Iranian orbit, but Iran has already established its influence in Baghdad in the security vacuum created after US combat troops left the country in 2011. Iranian militias, military generals, and religious leaders already play a significant role in Iraq; and American airstrikes have not improved Iraqi political

an-even-bleaker-future-in-iraq-if-the-militants-reign-of-terror-is-10117918.html (accessed 2 April 2016) and Tim Arango, "Sunni Resentment Muddles Prospect of Reunifying Iraq After ISIS," *The New York Times*, 12 February 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/13/world/middleeast/sunni-resentment-muddles-prospect-of-reunifying-iraq-after-isis.html?_r=1 (accessed 2 April 2016).

relations with the United States.[126] The question for American military and government leaders is whether they are willing to accept an Iraq that is politically closer to Iran, a situation that already exists, in exchange for combating the perception, particularly among Sunnis in Iraq, that the US Air Force is little more than the air arm of the Shia Iraqi government.

Meanwhile, ISIS is skillfully propagating an alternative narrative. The organization regularly posts videos of their soldiers with US weapons, airdropped supplies, and vehicles. The end result is that many Iraqis, both Sunni and Shia, believe the United States either created ISIS or is actively supporting ISIS.[127] As noted in the previous chapter, tepid Twitter campaigns and official State Department press releases do little to combat the ISIS narrative abroad. Instead, the United States must reevaluate how it presents not just negative information about "the true nature of ISIS," but, more importantly, stress the positive benefits of cooperating with the US and its allies. As Emile Simpson states, irregular war must be understood as a competition between rival strategic narratives.[128] The United States has thus far ceded the initiative to its ISIS enemy; this must stop and stop quickly. There is much to be gained by Iraq and countries throughout the region working together to rid the world of the ISIS scourge. The US should trumpet successes not just from the battlefield, but also from the perspective of

---

[126] Anne Barnard, "Iran Gains Influence in Iraq as Shiite Forces Fight ISIS," *The New York Times*, 5 March 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/06/world/middleeast/iran-gains-influence-in-iraq-as-shiite-forces-fight-isis.html?_r=0 (accessed 2 April 2016).
[127] Liz Sly, "Iraqis Think the US is in Cahoots With the Islamic State, and it is Hurting the War," *The Washington Post*, 1 December 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/iraqis-think-the-us-is-in-cahoots-with-isis-and-it-is-hurting-the-war/2015/12/01/d00968ec-9243-11e5-befa-99ceebcbb272_story.html (accessed 2 April 2016) and Paul D. Shinkman, "Poll: Syrians, Iraqis Believe US Created ISIS, Don't Support War," *US News and World Report*, 18 December 2015, http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015-12-18/poll-majority-of-syrians-iraqis-dont-support-obamas-anti-isis-war-believe-us-created-extremists (accessed 2 April 2016).
[128] Emile Simpson, *War From the Ground Up: Twenty-First Century Combat as Politics* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 61.

fostering cooperation to develop, spread, and sustain just governance throughout the Middle East.[129] Do not misinterpret this as an endorsement for imposing democracy and blindly hoping for a corresponding spread of peace. Instead, disaffected minorities must have governments that provide a future free from non-judicial violence. The United States should shape its LOEs, exploit its use of military power, and engage in the battle of strategic narrative accordingly.

Finally, the analysis presented in this work represents just a small fraction of the effort required to understand, define, combat, and defeat ISIS. The systems-theory model could be used to analyze efforts by the Iraqi government or other nations facing Islamic insurgencies throughout the region. This paper employed the systems-theory model to analyze America's campaign against ISIS solely in Iraq. ISIS in Iraq and Syria is a single entity due to the political vacuum in eastern Syria, but further research is required to study ISIS affiliates in Libya or any other geographically separated country. Many of these organizations have pledged loyalty to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi out of convenience, due to a sense of loyalty to an Islamic Caliphate, or to gain international prestige by linking themselves to ISIS. But the would-be members of ISIS are to some extent their own entities, beset by their own cultural characteristics, unjust governments, and questionable security environments. Each ISIS "franchise" faces its own fate independently, whether that be some degree of success or failure typical of insurgencies, and the United States should be deliberate in how it deals with each.[130] They must be studied individually rather than being lumped together because a strategy for improving governance in Iraq may look quite different than a possible solution to ISIS support in another country.

---

[129] For much more on the battle of the narrative against ISIS, see the website of Brian L. Steed, the US Army officer whose viewpoints inspired this thesis: http://www.narrativespace.net.

[130] Audrey Kuth Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 8.

In sum, the United States generally, and its armed forces specifically, must stop focusing on tactical battlefield victories. Instead, the US should view this conflict through the lens of propagating just government rule in Iraq to reduce Sunni popular support for ISIS. Like the conflict in Vietnam, America's armed forces may remain undefeated in combat. But such military prowess is meaningless in a war in which victory depends on political reform and physical security. The United States is engaged in a 21st-century battle of the narrative. The foregoing analysis suggests that the US has not yet realized this basic and important truth.

Bibliography

Articles

Arango, Tim. "Sunni Resentment Muddles Prospect of Reunifying Iraq After ISIS." *The New York Times,* 12 February 2016. http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/13/world/middleeast/sunni-resentment-muddles-prospect-of-reunifying-iraq-after-isis.html?_r=1 (accessed 2 April 2016).

B., S. "The Economist Explains: Where Islamic State Gets Its Money." *The Economist,* 4 January 2015. http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2015/01/economist-explains (accessed 23 March 2016).

Baker, Jim. "Systems Thinking and Counterinsurgencies." *Parameters* Winter 2006-07: 26-43. http://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/Articles/06winter/baker.pdf.

Barnard, Anne. "Iran Gains Influence in Iraq as Shiite Forces Fight ISIS." *The New York Times,* 5 March 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/06/world/middleeast/iran-gains-influence-in-iraq-as-shiite-forces-fight-isis.html?_r=0 (accessed 2 April 2016).

BBC News. "Iraq Profile—Timeline." 9 December 2015. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14546763 (accessed 22 March 2016).

BBC News. "Islamic State Group: Crisis in Seven Charts." 15 March 2016. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27838034 (accessed 22 March 2016).

BBC News. "Syria Profile—Timeline." 29 February 2016. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14703995 (accessed 22 March 2016).

Brigham, Robert K. "Battlefield Vietnam: A Brief History." PBS.org. https://www.pbs.org/battlefieldvietnam/history (accessed 26 February 2016).

Cockburn, Patrick. "Life Under ISIS: Sunnis Face an Even Bleaker Future in Iraq if the Militants' Reign of Terror is Finally Defeated." *Independent,* 18 March 2015.

http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/life-under-isis-sunnis-face-an-even-bleaker-future-in-iraq-if-the-militants-reign-of-terror-is-10117918.html (accessed 2 April 2016).

Dilanian, Ken. "US Says It's Slowing Flow, But Foreign Fighters Still Flock to ISIS." *NBC News*, 16 January 2016. http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/u-s-says-it-s-slowing-flow-foreign-fighters-still-n494281 (accessed 23 March 2016).

Elsbree, Willard H. "The 1953 Philippine Presidential Elections." *Pacific Affairs* 27, no. 1 (March 1954): 3-15.

Fifield, Russell H. "The Hukbalahap Today." *Institute of Pacific Relations* 20, no. 2 (24 Jan 1951): 13-18.

Filkins, Dexter. "The Shadow Commander." *The New Yorker,* 30 September 2013. http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/09/30/the-shadow-commander.

Fishel, Justin. "Fall of Ramadi: 30 Car Bombs, 10 as Big as Oklahoma City Blast, US Official Says." *ABC News*, May 20, 2015. http://abcnews.go.com/ABCNews/fall-ramadi-30-car-bombs-10-big-oklahoma/story?id=31188102oklahoma/story?id=31188102 (accessed 23 Dec 15).

Fox News. "Video Shows US Airstrikes Obliterating Islamic State Cash Stockpile in Mosul." 16 January 2016. http://www.foxnews.com/world/2016/01/16/video-shows-us-airstrike-obliterating-islamic-state-cash-stockpile-in-mosul.html (accessed 23 March 2016).

Goodman, Allan E. "The Political Implications of Rural Problems in South Vietnam: Creating Public Interests." *Asian Survey* 10, no. 8 (August 1970): 672-687.

The Islamic State. "From Hijrah to Khalifah." *Dabiq*, no. 1: 34-40.

Johnston, Patrick B. "The Islamic State's Money Problems." The RAND Corporation, 5 March 2016. http://www.rand.org/blog/2016/03/the-islamic-states-money-problems.html (accessed 23 March 2016).

Jones, Frank L. "Blowtorch: Robert Komer and the Making of Vietnam

   Pacification Policy." *Parameters* 35, no. 3 (Autumn 2005): 103-118.

Kalin, Stephen, and Ahmed Rasheed. "Iraq's Troubled Finances Slow Efforts to Rebuild Ramadi." *Reuters*, 9 February 2016. http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-ramadi-idUSKCN0VI0OU (accessed 23 March 2016).

Katz, Rita. "The State Department's Twitter War With ISIS Is Embarrassing." *Time*, 16 September 2014. http://time.com/3387065/isis-twitter-war-state-department/ (accessed 23 March 2016).

Martini, Edwin A. "Hearts, Minds, and Herbicides: The Politics of the Chemical War in Vietnam." *Diplomatic History* 37, no. 1 (2013): 58-84.

McGurn, William. "Calling it Genocide Won't Stop It: Now That It's Been Labeled, How About a Strategy to End the ISIS Slaughter?" *The Wall Street Journal*, 21 March 2016. http://www.wsj.com/articles/calling-it-genocide-wont-stop-it-1458602096 (accessed 27 March 2016).

Miklaszewski, Jim and Courtney Kube. "US Marine Killed, Three Others Injured by ISIS Rocket in Iraq." *NBC News*, 19 March 2016. http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/u-s-marine-killed-three-others-injured-isis-rocket-iraq-n541871 (accessed 1 April 2016).

Mohamed,Besheer. "Who are the Iraqi Kurds?" *Pew Research Center*, 20 August 2014. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/08/20/who-are-the-iraqi-kurds/ (accessed 22 March 2016).

Moore, Jack. "US-led Coalition Targets ISIS Banks in Mosul Strikes." *Newsweek*, 15 February 2016. http://www.newsweek.com/us-led-coalition-targets-isis-banks-mosul-strikes-426604 (accessed 23 March 2016).

Pagliery, Jose. "Inside the $2 Billion ISIS War Machine." *CNN Money*, 11 December 2015. http://money.cnn.com/2015/12/06/news/isis-funding/ (accessed 27 March 2016).

Rubin, Alissa J. "Militant Leader in Rare Appearance in Iraq." *The New*

York Times, 5 July 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/06/world/asia/iraq-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-sermon-video.html?_r=0.

Schmitt, Eric, and Helene Cooper. "ISIS Fighters Seized Advantage in Iraq Attack by Striking During Sandstorm." *The New York Times,* May 18, 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/19/world/middleeast/isis-fighters-seized-advantage-in-iraq-attack-by-striking-during-sandstorm.html (accessed 23 Dec 15).

Shinkman, Paul D. "Poll: Syrians, Iraqis Believe US Created ISIS, Don't Support War." *US News and World Report,* 18 December 2015. http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015-12-18/poll-majority-of-syrians-iraqis-dont-support-obamas-anti-isis-war-believe-us-created-extremists (accessed 2 April 2016).

Simpson, Cam, and Matthew Philips. "Why US Efforts to Cut Off Islamic State's Funds Have Failed." *Bloomberg Businessweek,* 19 November 2015. http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-11-19/why-u-s-efforts-to-cut-off-islamic-state-s-funds-have-failed (accessed 23 March 2016).

Sly, Liz. "Iraqis Think the US is in Cahoots With the Islamic State, and it is Hurting the War." *The Washington Post,* 1 December 2015. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/iraqis-think-the-us-is-in-cahoots-with-isis-and-it-is-hurting-the-war/2015/12/01/d00968ec-9243-11e5-befa-99ceebcbb272_story.html (accessed 2 April 2016).

Stearman, William L. "Lessons Learned From Vietnam." *Military Review* 90, no. 2 (March/April 2010): 109-116.

Talmadge, Caitlin, and Austin Long. "Why the US (Still) Can't Train the Iraqi Military." *The Washington Post,* 22 September 2015. https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/09/22/why-the-u-s-still-cant-train-the-iraqi-military/ (accessed 23 March 2016).

Vingoe, Sandy. "Iran's Iraqi Proxy War and the Potential Virtues of a Tehran-Washington Partnership." *The NATO Association of Canada,* 19 Oct 2015. http://natoassociation.ca/irans-iraqi-proxy-war-and-the-potential-virtues-of-a-tehran-washington-partnership/ (accessed 30 Dec 15).

Weiss, Caleb. "Qods Force Commander Photographed with Iraqi Militia in Aleppo." *The Long War Journal,* 18 Oct 15. http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/10/qods-force-commander-photographed-with-iraqi-militia-in-aleppo.php (accessed 31 Dec 15).

Wintour, Patrick, ed. "Oil Revenue Collapse Means ISIS Reliant on Gulf Funds, Inquiry Hears." *The Guardian,* 8 March 2016. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/08/oil-revenue-collapse-isis-reliant-gulf-funds-inquiry-hears (accessed 27 March 2016).

Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants." *The Atlantic,* March 2015. http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/.

Zenko, Micah. "Your Official Mission Creep Timeline of the US War in Syria." *Foreign Policy,* 19 October 2015, http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/10/19/official-mission-creep-timeline-us-war-in-syria-obama-administration/ (accessed 22 March 2016).

Books

Barrett, Roby C. *The Collapse of Iraq and Syria: The End of the Colonial Construct in the Greater Levant.* MacDill Air Force Base, FL: The Joint Special Operations University Press, 2016.

Chandler, Robert W. *War of Ideas: The US Propaganda Campaign in Vietnam.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1981.

Cronin, Audrey Kurth. *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009.

Greenberg, Lawrence A. *The Hukbalahap Insurrection: A Case Study of a Successful Anti-Insurgency Operation in the Philippines, 1946-1955.* Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1987.

Kalyvas, Stathis N. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Kilcullen, David. *Out of the Mountains: The Coming Age of the Urban Guerrilla.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Krepinevich, Jr., Andrew F. *The Army and Vietnam.* Baltimore, MD: The
    Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.

Lembke, MAJ Andrew E. *Lansdale, Magsaysay, America, and the
    Philippines: A Case Study of Limited Intervention
    Counterinsurgency.* Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies
    Institute Press, 2012.

Mintz, Jeanne S., Herbert M. Silverberg, and James E. Trinnaman. *Short
    Guide to Psychological Operations in the Republic of Vietnam —
    1965.* Washington, DC: Special Operations Research Office, 1965.

Simpson, Emile. *War From the Ground Up: Twenty-First Century Combat
    as Politics.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012.

The Pentagon Papers Volume II, Senator Gravel Edition. Boston, MA:
    Beacon Press, 1971.

Weiss, Michael, and Hassan Hassan. *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror.* New
    York, NY: Regan Arts, 2015.

Briefings/Point Papers/Memos/Messages

Combined Joint Task Force - Operation Inherent Resolve. "Building
    Partner Capacity." Facebook, 21 March 2016.
    https://www.facebook.com/CJTFOIR/photos/a.16451188590875
    82.1073741955.1489102498022553/1676411129291688/?type=3
    &theater (accessed 23 March 2016).

Goldkorn, Giacomo. "Syria and Iraq Main Ethnic and Religious Groups."
    Geopolitical Atlas, 22 February 2015.
    http://www.geopoliticalatlas.org/syria-and-iraq-main-ethnic-and-
    religious-groups/ (accessed 22 March 2016).

House Foreign Affairs Committee. *Countering ISIL: Are We Making
    Progress?* 113th Cong., 2nd sess., 10 December 2014.
    http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA00/20141210/102795/H
    HRG-113-FA00-Wstate-McGurkB-20141210.pdf.

Monaco, Lisa O. "Here's What You Need to Know About Our Strategy to
    Defeat ISIL." The White House, 19 November 2015.
    https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2015/11/19/heres-what-you-
    need-know-about-our-strategy-defeat-isil (accessed 23 March
    2016).

Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. *Current Terrorist Threat to the United States.* 114th Cong., 1st sess., 12 February 2015. http://www.nctc.gov/docs/Current_Terrorist_Threat_to_the_United_States.pdf.

Steed, Brian L. "Maneuver in the Narrative Space." http://www.narrativespace.net (accessed 9 April 2016).

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "Syria Regional Refugee Response." UNHCR, 22 March 2016. http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php (accessed 23 March 2016).

United States Agency for International Development. "Iraq—Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #2, Fiscal Year 2016." USAID, 4 March 2016. https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/iraq_ce_fs02_03-04-2016.pdf (accessed 23 March 2016).

United States Agency for International Development. "Syria Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #2." USAID, 4 February 2016. https://www.usaid.gov/crisis/syria/fy16/fs02 (accessed 23 March 2016).

Government Documents

General Assembly of the United Nations. "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 9 December 1948." United Nations, 1951. https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%2078/volume-78-I-1021-English.pdf (accessed 23 March 2016).

Historical Research Branch, Office of the Secretary, Joint Staff, MACV, *Command History, United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam, 1964.* Alexandria, VA: Headquarters Department of the Army, Information Management Support Agency, 1965. Document is now declassified.

Historical Research Branch, Office of the Secretary, Joint Staff, MACV, *Command History, United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam, 1965.* Alexandria, VA: Headquarters Department of the Army, Information Management Support Agency, 1966. Document is now declassified.

Historical Research Branch, Office of the Secretary, Joint Staff, MACV,

Command History, United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam, 1966. Alexandria, VA: Headquarters Department of the Army, Information Management Support Agency, 1967. Document is now declassified.

Historical Research Branch, Office of the Secretary, Joint Staff, MACV, *Command History, United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam, 1967 Volume I.* Alexandria, VA: Headquarters Department of the Army, Information Management Support Agency, 1968. Document is now declassified.

Historical Research Branch, Office of the Secretary, Joint Staff, MACV, *Command History, United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam, 1967 Volume II.* Alexandria, VA: Headquarters Department of the Army, Information Management Support Agency, 1968. Document is now declassified.

United States Department of Defense. "Operation Inherent Resolve: Targeted Operations Against ISIL Terrorists." Special Report. http://www.defense.gov/news/special-reports/0814_Inherent-Resolve (accessed 23 March 2016).

United States Department of State. "Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications." http://www.state.gov/r/cscc/ (accessed 23 March 2016).

United States Department of State. "The Global Coalition to Counter ISIL." http://www.state.gov/s/seci/ (accessed 23 Dec 15).

United States Department of State Office of the Historian. "US Involvement in the Vietnam War: The Tet Offensive 1968." US Department of State. https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/tet (accessed 31 Dec 15).

United States Government. *Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency.* 2012. http://www.mccdc.marines.mil/Portals/172/Docs/SWCIWID/COIN/Doctrine/Guide%20to%20the%20Analysis%20of%20Counterinsurgency.pdf (accessed 23 Dec 15).

Reports

Cordesman, Anthony H., Sam Khazai, and Daniel Dewit. *Shaping Iraq's Security Forces.* Washington DC: Center for Strategic and

International Studies, 16 December 2013.
http://csis.org/files/publication/131213_Iraq_security_forces.pdf.

Farmer, James. *Counter-Insurgency: Viet-Nam 1962-1963*. Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, August 1963.

Russo, Anthony J. *A Statistical Analysis of the US Crop Spraying Program in South Vietnam*, RAND Report RM-5450-1-ISA/ARPA. Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, October 1967.

Smith, O. R. *Psychological Operations by USAF/VNAF in South Vietnam 1965-Jun 1968, Special Report*. US Air Force Project CHECO Report. Washington, DC: United States Air Force, 16 September 1968.

Speeches

Kerry, John. "Remarks on Daesh and Genocide," Remarks by the Secretary of State, Washington, DC, 17 March 2016, http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/03/254782.htm.

Obama, Barack H. "Press Conference by President Obama —Antalya, Turkey," Remarks by the President, Antalya, Turkey, 16 November 2015, https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/11/16/press-conference-president-obama-antalya-turkey.

Obama, Barack H. "Remarks by the President on Progress Against ISIL," Remarks by the President, Washington, DC, 25 February 2016, https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/02/25/remarks-president-progress-against-isil.